

GROWTH OF THE IDEA OF RELIGIOUS TOLERATION IN
ENGLAND FROM 1689 TO 1727 .

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CHAPTER 1.

TOLERATION IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

If it is true that much of the religious intolerance and persecution of Seventeenth Century England was inspired by Anglican interests, it is also true that such Toleration as the Act of 1689 established could neither have been secured nor maintained without the active consent of an influential party in that Church. Nor was this a surprising attitude on their part, a sudden change of heart from Restoration and Jacobean sentiments. It was, in many ways, a true outcome of an essential and fruitful element in the Anglican tradition, an element which is clearly present among the more humane and philosophical churchmen of the half century or more that preceded the Revolution. For this reason, therefore, that the Anglican Tolerance of 1689 was based on reasoned conviction and not entirely dictated by hard necessity, its contribution to the final result was probably the more real and lasting.

1. The Background of Anglican Tolerance.

Apart from local and personal aspects of religious bigotry, we may assume the ultimate object of coercive measures to have been the setting up of one united Church in England. That a tolerant party should have existed at all within the Anglican Church is, therefore, remarkable; for, throughout the century, there were many and good reasons to make this appear a desirable and even necessary

end. Indeed, it is not altogether surprising that even humane and pious men should sometimes have felt that almost any means might justifiably be adopted to secure it. It was, perhaps, unfortunate for the Anglican Church, in these circumstances that coercive weapons were perilously near at hand. Many, doubtless, even in the seventeenth century used such weapons with considerable misgivings, but an influential minority clearly saw not only that such measures would finally prove ineffective, but that the motive underlying their adoption was in no way essential for the Christian faith. A single Church for England was to become a less urgent necessity as time went on; but it is worth remembering some of the reasons that seemed to demand it then.

In the first place, it was an inherited idea. The English Church, prior to 1689, was still adjusting itself to the new circumstances which had followed the Protestant Reformation. In its broadest terms the Reformation was a liberating movement, but those who separated from the Roman Church, in England as elsewhere, retained not only much of the Roman outlook in general, but many of its detailed doctrines and practices as well. Thus the old idea of one, holy, Catholic Church lived on among Anglicans, and seemed to preclude the very thought of a multitude of sects, all claiming Christian validity, and the right to exist and even to be heard. "Heretics" and "Schismatics", of course had long been known to the orthodox Church, but

she had dealt with them in what seemed the obvious manner. She simply did not admit that they were Christian at all, and had used every possible method, coercive or persuasive, to exterminate them altogether. They threatened, in fact, the unity of the Church, and this unity was deemed essential to Christian life and society. It was natural, therefore, that men who inherited the Roman view of "the Church" should inherit also some of the old horror of Schism, and that they should be tempted to adopt time-honoured if repulsive methods to suppress it.

Again, the opposition of Rome to the newly formed National Church impelled many serious Englishmen to seek for a united Protestant body. The active hostility of Rome towards the Church of England never abated but tended rather to increase as the century passed and the religious leanings of Charles II. and James II. emerged to embarrass the faithful Establishment. The Anglicans had a double task in face of this hostility; they had to provide a religious "authority" to take the place of Papal claims, and they had to build an organisation which would meet practical needs and embrace the mass of the people. A single Church would obviously meet the latter need; while the former ultimately made England the "people of a book", that is, the Authorized Version of the Bible. Chillingworth, in particular, applied himself to the hard question of Protestant authority. He opposed to the

findings of Trent, not "the Doctrine of Luther or Calvin, or Melancthon; nor the confession of Augusta, or Geneva, nor the Catechisme of Heidelberg, nor the Articles of the Church of England, no nor the Harmony of Protestant Confessions; but that wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with a greater Harmony, as a perfect rule of their Faith and actions, that is, the Bible"¹.

His emphatic conclusion, however, that "The Bible, I say, The Bible only is The Religion of Protestants!" was to lead, in the later English situation, to indirect but important results for the main subject before us.

Further, there was in the Church of England, a very fair amount of genuine piety and religious sentiment. Those who, by nature or choice, elected to adopt this attitude to life, felt, with some justice that it could but with difficulty be fostered and maintained without the strong protection of a settled and united Church. Communities like that of Little Gidding, or even of Great Tew in Oxfordshire, would not fare too well in the inclement atmosphere of sectarian strife. To Herbert and Vaughan, and to all who, with them, looked for the beauty of holiness, the outlook in the earlier Stuart period was hardly an encouraging one. The bitterness of contention seemed to be hardening men's hearts everywhere; while the grievous divisions paralyzed any effective social influence that a Christian society might naturally

1. "Religion of Protestants" VI : 56.

have been expected to wield.

More than all, perhaps, the peculiar connection with the political power, led the Church of England along the bitter path of intolerance and persecution. In the Christian centuries the relations between Church and State have frequently become a vital issue, and Mandell Creighton¹ has seen in their distortion a main source of early persecution. There is little doubt that this cause was at work in the seventeenth century. Then, as at other times and in other places, the Church found in the secular power a very present help in times of need. The particular need in this case was security in the two-fold battle against the Papists and the Puritans, both of whom were actively aggressive. The inevitable price was to be committed deeply to the ruling party in the State, committed, that is, to Stuart policy at a time of religious ferment and change. When, therefore, the secular power decided that some particular sect was politically dangerous and had to be suppressed, as in the pathetic case of Thomas Venner, who tried, with his Fifth Monarchy men, to gain possession of London on 6th January 1661, the Anglicans could hardly be expected to do other than approve. Yet the main embarrassment of the Church in this connection did not arise from these isolated and hopeless incidents. It came, rather, from the attitude of the Stuart rulers and the deep-seated and reasoned hostility which this

1. "Persecution and Tolerance" p.73.

attitude slowly engendered in the English people as a whole. The first James had exaggerated views on the divinity of kings. "Kings are justly called Gods", he informed¹ his wondering Parliament in 1609, "for that they exercise a manner of resemblance of Divine power upon earth: For if you will consider the Attributes of God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a King. God hath power to create, or destroy, make or unmake at his pleasure, to give life, or send death, to judge all, and to be judged accomptable to none: To raise low things, and to make High things low at his pleasure, and to God are both soul and body due. And the like power have kings:" "A good king" he had written² earlier, "will frame all his actions to be according to the law; yet is hee not bound thereto but of his good will, and for good example-giving to his subjects: - - So, a good king, although hee be above the Law, will subject and frame his actions thereto, for examples sake to his subjects, and of his owne free-will, but not as subject or bound thereto." A king was accountable only to God. Subjects had no right to take action against him and when an evil king ruled, "patience, earnest prayers to God, and amendment of their lives, are the onely lawful meanes to move God to relieve them of that heavie Curse³". This extreme doctrine had, perforce, to be accepted by Anglicans. If at first there were misgivings, the events of the Civil War and Commonwealth

1. Works, (1616 Folio) p.529.

2. Ibid. p.203. ("Trew Law of Free Monarchies").

3. Ibid. p.207.

tended to increase its hold on Churchmen. Its corollaries of non-resistance and passive obedience gained something like religious validity at the Restoration, notwithstanding the moral character of Charles. It was not until the second James began to reign that the implications of the doctrine were borne in on the Church of England. Under Anglican kings the theory had served in some measure the only possible use it could serve, namely to be a weapon against Papal assumptions. When by a curious irony it became a weapon in the Roman interest the pathetic fidelity of the English Church was finally exhausted, and it was left to the non-jurors to preserve the memory of the Divine Right of Kings. It is difficult to judge how far the doctrine was seriously believed in by leading Churchmen of the time, but, sceptical though some of them may have been, they were members of a body which accepted it and preached it with pious enthusiasm. This intimate connection between Church and State naturally led in practice to a fatal confusion of their functions which was not finally dissolved until John Locke appeared. It is not therefore hard to understand that every form of independent Puritanism came to be regarded, especially after 1649, as destructive of the very nature of English society.

For all these reasons, then, and for others more sentimental or more personal and unworthy, English churchmen were deeply concerned. They may have taken the

narrower view and their actions may now appear tragic, but caught as they were in the habits and circumstances of an unsettled age it was perhaps inevitable that the religious life of England should have taken the course it did take before 1689.

In the English Church, however, there were other forces working which, in the end, were not only to demonstrate the futility of persecution as a means to securing uniformity but were to reach the much more radical conclusion that conformity was not essential to the nation's well-being. At the outset most Anglicans admitted the necessity of one united Church, but many came to see that coercive methods were not likely to secure it. The thought of "Tolerating" dissent only came gradually, and before it was realised even in the tentative way of 1689, much bitterness and suffering had to be experienced and a vast controversial literature produced which is at once pathetic and sublime in its fierce invective or lofty idealism.

Toleration among Churchmen was not the outcome of one particular movement having this as its objective. It was, rather, an indirect result of a more liberal spirit applying itself, first of all, to other aspects of religion and theology. Its representatives did not form a distinct or continuous school, though they had so much in common that their efforts and achievements may be fittingly regarded as a great liberalizing factor throughout the Stuart reigns. Three aspects, in particular, of this more liberal movement in the Church of England may be noted as having prepared

the way for the Revolution settlement.

The first of these was the survival of a naturally humane and charitable outlook which not even the embittered controversies of the time could entirely drive away. This was not merely indifference to the true needs of the Church, or inability to grasp and abide by serious principles. There was, doubtless, then as always, a large body of people without deep conviction of any kind, ready to be swayed by the prevailing view; but it was far otherwise with many Churchmen who felt instinctively that persecution was destructive and wrong. They formed, in fact, a middle party between extreme High Churchmen and fanatical Puritans, men of serious purpose whose moral nature revolted from coercive and violent measures, and whose common sense suggested a more excellent way. This is undoubtedly the spirit of Jeremy Taylor, and this his great contribution to English toleration. His arguments, indeed, are often highly questionable, as when he advocates toleration on the ground that the persecutor is often wrong. He is not, says Tulloch¹ "essentially philosophic, rational, or liberal. Taylor is medieval, ascetic, casuistic in his mature type of thought. He is scholastic in argument, a pietist in feeling, a poet in fancy and expression; he is not a thinker. He seldom moves in an atmosphere of purely rational light; and even when his instincts are liberal and his reasoning highly rational in its results, he brings but a slight force

1. "Rational Theology in England" 1 : 347.

of thought, of luminous and direct comprehension to bear upon his work." Moreover, Taylor was a convinced Anglican and a steadfast Royalist. In the first of these causes, and at a time of domestic sorrow, he published, at Oxford, in 1642, "Episcopacy Asserted against the Acephali and Aerians New and Old"; in the latter he suffered the loss of many things and underwent imprisonment. It is, therefore, all the more remarkable that, in 1647, the "Discourse on the Liberty of Prophesying" should come from his pen. It has been suggested that the Tolerant attitude of the Independents, who allowed the captive king whatever form of spiritual ministration he desired, may have impressed the writer's mind. It may be that the growing confusion of Church affairs drove him to moderation; it may have been the natural expression of a pious Christian mind. At all events the "Liberty of Prophesying" remains a notable appeal for charity and moderation in a time of violence and bitterness. "I thought it might not misbecome my duty and endeavours" he wrote in the Epistle Dedicatory, "to plead for peace and charity and forgiveness and permissions mutual", and this remained the keynote of a sympathetic appeal for more tolerant ways in religion. It is difficult to judge how far such men express the feelings of their time and how far they mould and direct them. Doubtless every parish would have its own particular situation, for not every priest would be so temperate as Taylor and not all Dissenters would be harmless and sincere. Yet we may be sure that persecution must have troubled many

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The second factor that affected the question of toleration was the doctrinal and ecclesiastical controversy which the Anglicans were forced to carry on with the Church of Rome. The effects of the situation were not all foreseen by English Churchmen, but one of them was the modifying of the attitude towards Protestant Dissenters at least. The Roman Church offered the apparently simple dogma of its own infallibility, and weaker and more timid minds, and possibly the people as a whole looked for some corresponding "authority" in the reformed National Church. Of the many Anglicans who essayed this task of re-statement,

1. "Diary", 7 Aug. 1664 (4 months after first Conventicle Act.)

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1. "Diary", 7 Aug. 1664 (4 months after first Conventicle Act.)

by far the greatest was William Chillingworth, who in addition to outstanding intellectual gifts, had the useful experience of having joined the Roman Catholics for a brief period in his younger days. Controversy seems to have been his natural element for, according to Aubrey,¹ even while at Trinity College Oxford, "he did walk much in the College grove and there contemplate, and meet with some cuds-head or other and dispute with him and baffle him."

In 1637, when he was thirty-five, his powers in this direction found their finest expression in "The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation." It was an answer to a Jesuit called Knott, whose work he followed chapter by chapter, and, incidentally, it set forth the Protestant position as it had not been done before. The Bible, he asserted in one of its parts, is the only religion of Protestants. "Propose to me anything out of the Bible," he wrote,² "and require whether I believe it or no, and seem it never so incomprehensible to human reason, I will subscribe it with head and heart as knowing no demonstration can be stronger than this: God hath said so, therefore it is true." This was definite at least, but it lead inevitably to another question, for it was clear even in 1637 that those who accepted the authority of Scripture were far from agreed as to its interpretation. Who then could be final judge in the matter? To this there is ultimately only one answer, and this Chillingworth gives in enunciating

1. Quoted by Tulloch "Rat. Theol." 1 : 262.

2. "Religion of Protestants" VI : 56.

the essentially Protestant doctrine of private judgment. "Every man is to judge for himself with the judgment of discretion."¹ In the England of his time, however, such exercise of private judgment in religious matters had actually led to serious divisions, to separations and persecutions. He argued, therefore, on the one hand, that Christian people ought not to separate because opinions differed on non-essential matters, and, on the other, that a Church should be able to comprehend such differences without striving for an impossible uniformity by violent and penal measures. "Take away," he urged² "this persecuting, burning, cursing, damning of men for not subscribing to the words of men as the words of God; require of Christians only to believe Christ, and to call no man master but Him only; let those leave claiming infallibility that have no title to it, and let them that in their word disclaim it, disclaim it likewise in their actions. In a word take away tyranny and restore Christians to their just and full liberty of captivating their understanding to Scripture only, and as rivers, when they have a free passage, run all to the ocean, so it may well be hoped, by God's good blessing, that universal liberty, thus unrestricted, may quickly reduce Christendom to truth and unity." These were brave words for 1637, and though the Church of England, for many years after that date, was fated to be led in other paths than these

1. "Religion of Protestants" II : 170.

2. Ibid. II : 38-9.

marked out by Chillingworth, his influence on his own contemporaries was very great, while the later latitudinarians, Stillingfleet, Tillotson, possibly even Locke owe more to his inspiration than the casual references to him would indicate.

The third influence which ultimately led many Anglicans to a more tolerant outlook was the rise of an independent movement which sought to find a more rational and permanent basis for religious experience than contemporary dogmas supplied. This movement was doubtless, affected by the practical needs and controversies of the time, but fundamentally it was an inevitable consequence of the Reformation. Its starting point may be traced to the Arminian controversy, which broke out on the Continent at the beginning of the seventeenth century and culminated in the Synod of Dort 1619. To this assembly came an English Churchman, called John Hales, who, in the course of the proceedings, "bid John Calvin goodnight". He returned to England to become a Fellow of Eton, and a member, with Chillingworth, of a group of broad-minded men which gathered around Lucius Cary, second Lord Falkland, at his home at Great Tew near Oxford. Hales, like Chillingworth, was, strangely enough, a friend of Laud, and his writings, particularly the "Tract concerning Schism," were to become almost canonical among the "latitudinarians" who dominated the Church of England in King William's time. He was less concerned than Chillingworth in the Roman question, but, for all that, they had much in common, and came, if by

different paths, to the same justification of reason and private judgment. Hales did not by any means, commend heresy or schism: "Division is not but where communion is or ought to be," he wrote¹: "Now Communion is the strength and good of all Society, whether Sacred or Civil." Nevertheless, Schism is necessary at times: "For when either false or uncertain conclusions are obtruded of truth, and Acts either unlawful, or ministering just scruple are required of us to be performed, in these cases consent were conspiracy, and open contestation is not faction or Schism, but due Christian animosity."² Schism, he concluded, usually arose by reason of "matters of fact", "matters of opinion", or "points of ambition". Dealing with the last of these he wrote decisively on episcopal strivings and added: "for they do but abuse themselves and others that would persuade us, that Bishops by Christ's institution have any superiority over other men further than of Reverence, or that any Bishop is superior to another further than positive order, agreed upon amongst Christians, hath prescribed."³ An Independent might not have said much more; and though Laud was displeased, and extracted an apology, the leaven of private judgment was effectively at work in the Church of England. The inevitable corollary of private judgment was toleration.

Chillingworth and Taylor shared the views of John Hales, and all three were mainly interested in ecclesiastical

1. "Tract on Schism" p.1.

2. "Tract" p.1.

3. Ibid. p.6.

matters. The more distinctively philosophical and rational movement, however, was carried on by Benjamin Whichcote and Ralph Cudworth, members of "that Zealous house,"¹ Emmanuel College, Cambridge, who with Henry More, were prominent members of a remarkable group known as the Cambridge Platonists. They were concerned to find a reasonable ground for belief, to work out what may be called a philosophy of religion. It is significant that "they read much of Episcopius"² who had been the chief Arminian spokesman at the Synod of Dort. Whichcote, according to Burnet,³ was much for liberty of conscience; and being disgusted with the dry systematical way of these times, he studied to raise those who conversed with him to a nobler set of thoughts, and to consider religion as a seed of a deiform nature, (to use one of his own phrases). In order to do this he set young students much on reading the ancient philosophers, chiefly Plato, ^{Cicero} Tully, and ^{Plotinus} Plotin. They were in More's words,⁴ "above all sects whatsoever as sects"; they lived, as Cudworth told the House of Commons in 1679, not to establish any authority, "but only to persuade men to the life of Christ." The personal influence of these men tended to moderate and tolerant views and was not without effect among the younger men in the University and the more philosophically disposed among the Churchmen. Their work was soon to be carried still further by the English Latitudinarians.

1. Evelyn "Diary" 31 Aug. 1654.

2. "Own Times" i : 324.

3. "Own Times" i : 321.

4. Quoted by Tulloch, op.cit.II : 339.

Burnet

It is hardly to be expected under any circumstances that progress toward the acceptance of a very new idea should be easy or continuous. The minds of men are easily alarmed by outward events so that they hesitate to take a step the consequences of which have not been proved by experience. The outward events from the Restoration to the Revolution were such as bred caution and doubt in many serious Churchmen, influenced though they might have been by the new "latitude" in religious thought. In Stillingfleet's "Irenicum", for example, which was published in 1660, there is a curious blend of the political theories of Hobbes and the liberality of Hales. He thought of "comprehension" more than toleration, but was prepared to found this comprehension on a fairly wide base. "The Unity of the Church" he said,¹ "is a Unity of love and affection and not a bare uniformity of practice and opinion." Beyond that he hardly cared to go, while others such as Glanvil were equally uncertain about toleration as such, amid the fierce controversies and confused pamphleteering of the time. In 1675, however, the aged Bishop Croft of Hereford who, like Chillingworth, had undergone an early conversion to the Roman Church from which he later returned, published "The Naked Truth, or the True State of the Primitive Church." Its appearance said Anthony Wood,² "at such a time was like a comet." The most liberal and charitable outlook was advanced, and too zealous insistence on details of Church

1. "Irenicum" preface.

2. "Athenae Oxonienses" IV : 312 (ed. Philip Bliss, 1813).

practice condemned and deplored. Replies were, naturally, abundant and acrimonious, but the influence of "The Naked Truth" was extraordinarily great, and undoubtedly paved the way for the distinctive Latitudinarians who were at hand. Of these, an outstanding figure was Tillotson. Like others, he may well at times have been uneasy on the actual question of tolerating Dissent, but it is significant that he was and remained the friend of Owen, Penn and Firmin. Of that same school and period was Gilbert Burnet, later to become Bishop of Salisbury and historian of his own time. In him we find Anglicanism at its best, undogmatic and tolerant. "Violence alienates them further whom we ought to gain upon", he preached¹, before the Lord Mayor of London on 29th September 1681, "and likewise increases their party by the compassion of all good-natured people." "I have long looked on liberty of conscience," he wrote² again, "as one of the rights of human nature, antecedent to society, which no man could give up, because it was not in his own power; and our Saviour's rule, of doing as we would be done by, seemed to be a very express decision to all men, who would lay the matter home to their own conscience and judge as they would willingly be judged by others." Anglican Latitudinarianism therefore, was well advanced towards toleration for deeper reasons than expediency. It only needed the religious activities of James II to give the idea practical expression. This unhappy king drove

1. "Exhortation to Peace and Unity."

2. "Own Times" v : 107.

Churchmen and Nonconformists together in sudden panic, and when the political storm was overpast the Toleration Act had become law.

During the seventeenth century, prior to 1689, when most men felt that some settlement must be made of the religious question, two practical suggestions were considered by the better sort of Churchmen. The first is known as "comprehension" and was much debated at different times; the second was toleration, which was finally, if reluctantly, adopted.

Comprehension, in general, meant some modification of the State Church so that Dissenters with "tender consciences" might be able to enter its communion. This was the predominant idea up to 1662, for the Puritans of the Commonwealth still adhered to the idea of a national religion. As early as 1641, James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, prepared a scheme of modified episcopacy which was designed to appeal, in the first instance, to Presbyterians, and possibly to Independents. His real motive, however, was probably expediency, for he had no wish to give any kind of toleration to Roman Catholics. In any case, the break in Anglican continuity brought about by the Civil War and the Commonwealth, made his plan of little value at the time. With the return of Charles, it again came into temporary prominence, for there still remained some Anglicans who believed a "comprehension" possible, extending, at any rate, to Presbyterians. With this in view a conference was called to the Bishop of London's lodgings at the Savoy,

in 1661. Of the episcopalians present, Sheldon and Gunning, afterwards Bishop of Ely, were the dominating figures; Richard Baxter was the leading Presbyterian. The discussions centered, finally, on somewhat irrelevant metaphysical issues. Here, according to Burnet:¹ "The two men that had the chief management of the debate, were the most unfit to heal matters, and the fittest to widen them, that could have been found out. Baxter was the opponent, and Gunning was the respondent." The conference ended without result, but not before the Cavalier Parliament, Anglican and bigoted, had been returned to pass the Corporation and Uniformity Acts. From this point many date the real beginning of English Nonconformity as something distinct and apart from the Established Church. "The Act of Uniformity, passed in 1662," says C.J. Abbey², "gave a standing to Dissent which it had never possessed before." The standing was hardly an enviable one, to say the least, and the penal legislation which gave it, did not bring the already remote possibilities of comprehension any nearer. Yet in 1667, Wilkins, brother-in-law of Cromwell and future Bishop of Chester, brought forward another scheme. So strong was the opposition of the Commons, however, that Charles, who is said to have been favourable, had to see it abandoned, while a second Conventicle Act replaced the first which expired in 1668. Thereafter, comprehension was impossible until the new circumstances created by the

1. "Own Times" 1 : 310.

2. "English Church in the Eighteenth Century" 1 : 384.

Revolution brought it into discussion again.

Meantime, though voices here and there, including that of Wilkins, had suggested Toleration, the majority of Churchmen hesitated to adopt it. To many, it appeared a radical step to legalize Dissent; yet, in the end, there was no alternative, for in 1689 something, clearly, had to be done. By this time, too, many Dissenters had no further wish for inclusion in the National Church. This was particularly true of the more extreme sects, and they also dreaded any scheme of comprehension that might leave them a weak, dissenting remnant. On the other hand many Anglicans feared that the inclusion of Dissenters might drive some High-Churchmen to secede. The outcome was the Toleration Act of 1689; and if its provisions were meagre enough, they did at least bring relief to many, and provided a base on which future measures could be built.

II. Church Affairs and Toleration, 1689-1727.

Though the violence that so often goes with such events was absent from the English Revolution of 1688, its effects, for all that, were profound and lasting. One of the important factors in the change had been the religious question, so it was natural that these effects should be more keenly felt in the state-connected Church of England than in any other sect. But even a successful revolution does not dispose of ancient and deep-rooted problems so easily as prophetic enthusiasm would desire; so we find that much time and bitterness had yet to pass before the

toleration question could be settled with anything like satisfaction to those concerned. On the one hand stood the Roman Catholics, disappointed and unreconciled; on the other stood the various groups of Protestant Dissenters, which had now become permanent factors in the national life, with little desire on the part of their members to give up independence and return to the National Church. In the years that followed 1689, the Roman Catholics found themselves far less favourably placed than under the Stuart kings, while the Dissenters had to suffer the Sacheverell frenzy and the passing of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts. In these circumstances, it may be argued, the Church of England showed a narrow and illiberal temper, with little of that nobler and more tolerant spirit, so frequent in its leaders of the previous age. Nevertheless, it must be maintained that when an extension of the liberties provided by the Toleration Act, became necessary and desirable it was in no small measure made possible by the attitude of many sincere and loyal Anglicans. This attitude, no doubt, was due in many cases to an appreciation of altered circumstances which made a change of policy almost a necessity, but it was also due to the persistence of an old and honourable tradition in Anglican thought which is henceforth generally known as "latitudinarianism". Here we shall notice briefly some of these circumstances which, up to 1727, led many Anglicans to adopt a less rigorous policy towards the Protestant Dissenters at least, and afterwards consider the implications of Latitudinarian

doctrine and practice with regard to toleration.

The attendant circumstances of the Revolution and the Toleration Act, had, naturally, a very great influence on the matter. Long before 1688 events in England had been moving towards a change, but in James' reign they became hurried and critical. A pleasant historical fashion in recent times has been set by the efforts of Sir Charles Petrie¹ and his friends to vindicate the motives that inspired the King's policy. In this, however, these apologists are either more credulous or less sceptical than most of his contemporaries, for the activities of this unhappy man in government, church affairs, and the universities were generally taken as evidence that a serious attempt was being made to Romanize the nation. Even the faithful preachers of non-resistance and passive obedience were at last alarmed, and a fatal breach was opened between the King and the Established Church. The evidence of Anglican Protestantism which emerged was not entirely lost on the Dissenters, for whom the Church of Rome remained the supreme and hated apostasy². When, therefore, on 4th April 1687, James announced the first Declaration of Indulgence, the Nonconformists for the most part held aloof. "A cool and philosophical observer" says Macaulay³, "would undoubtedly have pronounced that all the evil arising from all the intolerant laws which Parliaments had framed was not

1. "Jacobite Movement". p.59.

2. cf. Bunyan's "Giant Pope" in "Pilgrims Progress."

3. "Hist. of Eng." 1 : 432.

to be compared to the evil which would be produced by a transfer of the legislative power from the Parliament to the Sovereign. But such coolness and philosophy are not to be expected from men who are smarting under present pain, and who are tempted by the offer of immediate ease. A Puritan divine might not indeed be able to deny that the dispensing power now claimed by the Crown was inconsistent with the fundamental principles of the constitution. But he might perhaps be excused if he asked 'What was the constitution to him ?' In fact, however, there was sufficient coolness and philosophy among the Dissenters to make the number of ministers and churches who formally "thanked" the king remarkably small. "Few" says Burnet¹, "concurred in those addresses; and the persons that brought them up were mean and inconsiderable." His judgment may be pardoned when men like Baxter, Howe and Bunyan were unmoved by the offer of relief from such an unexpected quarter. They, and their followers, however, did not hesitate to profit from the situation in a practical way, so the meeting-houses began once more to fill so rapidly that in many places, the Parish Churches, as on a previous occasion were "left exceeding thin".² Still, it was clear that on the major issue the Dissenters had been loyal to their Anglican brethren and, in the momentous year that followed, Churchmen of all schools were eager to confirm their

1. "Own Times". iii : 175.

2. "Calendar of State Papers." (Domestic Series). - Sir G. Shakerley: October, 1672 - February, 1673. p.300.
Evelyn's "Diary" (Bray) ii : 265.

new-found allies in resistance to the King. Lord Halifax, in the famous "Letter to a Dissenter" set out in lucid terms the constitutional issue involved and even the venerable Sancroft was moved to think of conciliation. In Articles¹ addressed to his clergy on 27th July 1688, he exhorted them: "That they also walk in wisdom towards these, who are not of our communion; and if there be in their parishes any such, that they neglect not frequently to confer with them in the spirit of meekness, seeking by all good ways and means to gain and win them over to our communion. More especially, that they have a very tender regard to our brethren, the protestant dissenters, that upon occasion offered they visit them at their houses, and receive them kindly at their own, and treat them fairly whenever they meet them, discoursing calmly and civilly with them, persuading them (if it may be) to a full compliance with our church; or at least that whereto we have already attained, we may all walk by the same rule and mind the same things. And in order hereunto, that they take all opportunities of assuring and convincing them, that the bishops of this church are really and sincerely irreconcilable enemies to the errors, superstitions, idolatries and tyrannies of the church of Rome, and that the very unkind jealousies which some have had of us to the contrary were altogether groundless.

"And in the last place that they warmly and most

1. Cardwell, "Documentary Annals of the Reformed Church of England." ii : 325 (Oxford 1859) Art.XI.

affectionately exhort them to join with us in daily fervent prayer to the God of peace for a universal blessed union of all reformed churches, both at home and abroad, against our common enemies; that they all, who do confess the name of our dear Lord, and do agree in the truth of His holy word, may also meet in one holy communion, and live in perfect unity and godly love." There was, in fact, sufficient unity among all English Protestants in 1688 to make the change of ruler the comparatively easy matter that it was.

When William III had been firmly established on the Stuart throne, Sancroft's "tender regard" for the Dissenters was a prominent sentiment among many Anglicans. The Protestant fidelity which had helped so greatly in the change was clearly deserving of some reward; and though Sancroft and others were now prevented by their inability to subscribe the new oath of allegiance, from participating in the well-meant efforts, other Churchmen, not so hindered, were ready to take up the task. The best enthusiasms, however, are at the mercy of time, and the very short time that elapsed before a measure for "comprehension" could be presented was yet sufficient to defeat its purpose. "I happened to come into the House of Lords," says Burnet¹, the new bishop of Salisbury, "when two great debates were managed with much heat in it. The one was about the toleration and comprehension, and the other was about the imposing of oaths on the clergy." On 11th March, 1689,

1. "Own Times" iv : 14.

the Earl of Nottingham introduced, in the Upper House, a Bill "for uniting their Majesties' Protestant subjects", and there is little doubt that both clerical and lay supporters of the measure were prepared to make considerable concessions. Tennison, for example, who was shortly to succeed Archbishop Tillotson had carefully examined the liturgy with a view to altering those points which seemed most offensive to moderate Dissenters and was an assiduous supporter of the Bill; and Burnet, while opposing those provisions which seemed to place the normal powers of spiritual courts in temporal hands, thus records¹ his views on some of the outstanding difficulties: "This did not so recommend me to the clergy, as to balance the censure I came under, for moving, in another proviso of that bill, that the subscription, instead of assent and consent, should only be to submit with a promise of conformity. There was a proviso likewise, in the bill, for dispensing with kneeling at the sacrament, and being baptized with the sign of the cross, to such as, after conference upon those heads, should solemnly protest, they were not satisfied as to the lawfulness of them. That concerning kneeling occasioned a vehement debate: for, the posture being the chief exception that the dissenters had, the giving up this was thought to be the opening a way for them to come into employments. Yet it was carried in the house of lords. And I declared my self zealous for it. For since it was acknowledged

1. "Own Times" iv : 18.

that the posture was not essential in itself, and that scruples, how ill grounded soever, were raised upon it, it seemed reasonable to leave the matter as indifferent in its practice as it was in its nature." But the Bill was far from well received in either House of Parliament, and ultimately, Lords and Commons joined in an address to the King asking, among other things, that the Convocations should meet again before the matter went further. Accordingly, both Convocations were summoned and, on 13 September of the same year, a commission was given to ten bishops and twenty inferior clergy to prepare the business to be considered at their sessions. An ominous sign, however, was the refusal of several members to act on this commission. Those who remained drew up a scheme involving modifications of liturgy and practice, which, it was hoped, would enable the majority of Nonconformists to enter the Established fold. These proposals were not destined to come before the body for which they had been prepared, for the hostile temper of the Canterbury Convocation was decisively revealed at the very start. It had been confidently assumed that John Tillotson, then Dean of St. Paul's, would be nominated prolocutor; but when this office fell to Dr Jane, Dean of Gloucester, and one of the dissentient members of the preparatory commission, even the most zealous advocates of the reforming measure were convinced of the inevitable issue. The measure was not presented at all, and so ended finally the dream of religious comprehension in England.

Meanwhile, another bill, also introduced by Nottingham,

had a much more creditable history. On 14 March, 1689, a measure came before the Lords, and, shortly afterwards, before the Commons "for exempting their Majesties' Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of certain laws." The majority of churchmen, it is fairly clear, had little enthusiasm for its provisions, though some, like Burnet gave it their unqualified support. "I showed so much zeal for this act," he tells us¹ "As ^a very much sunk my credit, which had risen from the approbation I had gained, for opposing that which enacted the taking the oaths." But the Bill of Toleration passed easily, and received the royal assent on 24 May. It is not inaptly called the "Toleration Act", for it stopped far short of religious liberty. The larger Dissenting bodies were given freedom to worship and to carry on their schools on certain conditions, but the Test and Corporation Acts remained. Romanists and Socinians did not even secure these grudging concessions but had to wait for many years until these scant beginnings were enlarged upon.

In the thirty years that followed 1689 the circumstance which most affected the Anglican attitude to toleration was the passing of significant church preferments to men of liberal views. In particular, the vacant bishoprics were, with some exceptions in the reign of Anne, almost invariably presented to leading Whig or Latitudinarian churchmen whose

1. "Own Times" IV : 17.

votes in the House of Lords, on more than one occasion, were decisive in shaping or rejecting the measure of the day. This new and timely practice, we shall see, was due at first to pressing needs of government, though many see in it the spiritual reflection of what is somewhat hastily called the laxity and indifference of the age. It is clear, however, that there was more than mere indifference in the change, and the spirit of the various controversies that disturbed the peace throughout these years is evidence that two great conceptions of the Christian faith were striving for the mastery. The Nonjuring Schism and the Convocation and Bangorian controversies were ultimately but the incidents of this deeper and more fundamental struggle going on between the old, exclusive, High Church spirit rooted in authority and what was taken to be primitive custom and the more humane and philosophical spirit which the Latitudinarians inherited from the Cambridge school. Toleration, in some form, was implicit in the latter position, and this position was destined to dominate the Church of England.

Two incidents within the Church contributed, the one to facilitate the change in leaders, the other to leave effective power entirely in their hands. The first was the "Nonjuring" schism at King William's accession and the other the suppression of Convocation under George I.

The Nonjuring schism had its origin in the inability of certain Churchmen to subscribe the oaths of allegiance to William and Mary. Successful changes in the government

of nations have not infrequently been carried out with more enthusiasm than prudence, and, though that of 1688 had, in general, been marked by moderation and good sense, historical opinion has always been divided on the wisdom of that judgment which required all clergy of the Church of England to swear allegiance to the new dynasty. No one, indeed, seems to have been over-exercised in mind so long as the oath, with its penalty of deprivation, was confined to lay officials of the state; but when it was extended to include the established clergy a horrified and scandalized party of Churchmen and politicians became loud in its outcry. In the Houses of Parliament, and, less coherently, in the furious pamphlet controversy which raged outside, many old arguments were asserted or discarded as occasion required. The cases of Abiathar, a Jewish priest deprived by Solomon, and of Chrysostom in later times, were examined with meticulous zeal that the scandal of an English bishop's being deprived by a king, so doubtfully enthroned as William, might not stain the annals of the apostolic Anglican communion. Precedents were cited and timely manuscripts, relevant to the issue, produced from the Bodleian. But neither piety, learning, nor superstition could alter the fact that fourteen bishops had been deprived of their sees in Elizabeth's reign, and that James II had suspended Compton, Bishop of London, in a far more arbitrary manner than Parliament was now adopting. In the end, of course, the point at issue was not the right of the secular power to deprive a bishop of his office, but whether, in the

present case, that secular power was itself legal. Once more, then, in Professor Laski's¹ words, we have "the obverse side of the Divine Right of kings" and thus "the real interest of the Nonjuring schism was political rather than religious." In the fury and confusion of the strife this fact was clearly grasped by the abler and more balanced minds. Thus Edward Stillingfleet, "in a Letter out of the Country, Occasioned by Dr. B---'s Refusal of the Bishoprick of Bath and Wells" arrives² without much difficulty at the obvious conclusion; "If it be unlawful to succeed a deprived Bishop, then he is the Bishop of the Diocess still; and then the Law that deprives him is no Law, and consequently the King and Parliament, that made that Law, no King nor Parliament; and how can this be reconciled with the Oath of Allegiance, unless the Doctor can swear Allegiance to him, who is no King, and hath no Authority to govern? If the deprived Bishop be the only lawful Bishop, then the People and Clergy of his Diocess are bound to own him and no other; then all Bishops, who own the Authority of a new Arch-bishop, and live in Communion with him, are Schismatics; and the Clergy, who live in Communion with Schismatical Bishops, are Schismatics themselves; and the whole Church of England now established by Law is Schismatical, and Doctor B--- himself a Schismatick, if he communicate with it. And thus we have no Church, or only a Schismatical Church as well as no King." All the learning of Dodwell

1. "Political Thought in England." p.66.

2. "Vindication of their Majesties Authority to Fill the Sees of the Deprived Bishops". Works iii : 962. (1710).

and all the polemic of Leslie and Hickes could not alter this essential issue, and their efforts only served to call forth even more drastic statements on the other side. It was, in fact, the posthumous works of George Hickes that provoked Hoadly, in 1716, to the radical conclusions of "A Preservative against the Principles and Practices of the Nonjurors both in Church and State" which not only justifies the Revolution on grounds of practical necessity but maintains its civil states possess inherent rights of self-protection against ecclesiastical officers no less than lay. As the State may on occasion take away even life itself, which it has not given, "for the Good of the whole - - it follows, that Though the Right to exercise an Ecclesiastical Office be not supposed to come, in the least degree, from the Civil Power; yet it may be taken away by the Supreme Civil Power, just as Life, and Property; and upon the same Account, viz. if the continuance of it be inconsistent with the Safety of the Whole: and this, not by any Spiritual Power, but by a Right inherent in it, and inseparable from it, to guard the Society from being undone by Ecclesiastical Officers, as well as by Lay-men."¹ In Hoadly's view, to preach and pray against the government was political subversion. "I have - - shewn" he therefore argues², "that this particular Deprivation by the Supreme Civil Power, is a Point of a Civil Nature; and ariseth, not from any Mixing of Two Incoherent Powers, but from the One

1. Hoadly. "Preservative against - - - Nonjurors." Works

1 : 574.

2. *ibid.* 1 : 582.

Undoubted and Undeniable Principle, of Self-defense; and from this plain Maxim, that the Civil Power could not be the Civil Power, without having a Right (properly so called,) to do every thing, necessary for its own Preservation from Ruine, and for the Support of its Civil Authority." We are here, to say the least, some distance from the High Church doctrine of the preceding century; but such conclusions had far-reaching implications in more than one direction.

The measure imposing the oaths on the clergy became law on 22 April, 1689, and all subscriptions had to be made by 1 August, of that same year. The majority, in the end, took the oath, but a remnant, now called the Non-jurors, preferred the stony ground of dissent to a position which outraged the High Church conscience. At their head was Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury with six of his suffragans, Turner of Ely, Lloyd of Norwich, Frampton of Gloucester, Lake of Chichester, White of Peterborough, and Ken of Bath and Wells, and they were followed by about four hundred of the lesser clergy. The movement was fore-doomed to slow decay and reiterated praise of its beauty and pathos by subsequent apologists has failed to give it more than antiquarian interest. Its essential bitterness is commonly ignored and the caustic truth of Lord Macaulay's¹ classic judgment has not been seriously challenged. "Something is to be said" he writes, "for the man who

1. "Hist. of Eng." 11 : 101.

sacrifices liberty to preserve order. Something is to be said for the man who sacrifices order to preserve liberty. --- But the nonjurors sacrificed, not liberty to order, nor order to liberty, but both liberty and order to a superstition as stupid and degrading as the Egyptian worship of cats and onions." With the departure of the doctrine of divine hereditary right from its entrenched position in the National Church, a factor which for near a hundred years had been a fruitful source of intolerance was removed from English life. The piety of Ken and Robert Nelson cannot altogether hide the old, exclusive spirit that inspires the arguments of Dodwell and colours the assaults of Leslie on Dissenters, Jews, Socinians, Quakers and all, indeed, who differed from him. Nor was it only for the Protestants that their dislike existed. Sancroft's views on Rome we have already seen, and these were easily more extreme among his followers. William Sherlock had published sixteen works on the subject in the space of two years and had even matched his pen with Bossuet himself. But their actual powers were limited from the moment of secession for effective power was now in other hands.

By 1691 the vacant sees had all been filled by "swearing" candidates more favourable to the new administration. They were, for the most part, Latitudinarian in religion and Whig in politics and their elevation had far-reaching consequences for toleration. On 31 May, 1691, John Tillotson, Dean of St. Paul's, of Puritan stock and married to Elizabeth French, niece of Cromwell and step-daughter of Bishop Wilkins, was

consecrated to Sancroft's place at Canterbury. He had long favoured concessions to Nonconformist scruples,¹ and at his house on 14 January, 1689 was held the meeting to explore the possibilities of reconciling the Dissenters. The other sees were filled by men of similar opinions. Simon Patrick followed Lake at Chichester in 1689, and then Turner at Ely in 1691. Himself an ex-Provost of the Queen's College, Oxford, he protested, during the Occasional Conformity debates of 1703, against "the heat and passion of the universities"² with regard to toleration. Norwich was filled by John Moore, the notorious bibliophile, in 1691, and the same year Edward Fowler went to Gloucester. Fowler was of Presbyterian origin and remained an ardent Protestant. So, too, did Richard Cumberland, Whiston's "truly great and good man", who went to Peterborough in 1690. "Poor Dr Ken"³ of Bath and Wells was replaced, in 1691, by Richard Kidder, whom the Nonjurors called "an Erastian and Latitudinarian Traditour"⁴ and accused of admitting Dissenters to the sacraments of the Church without a full repentance of their former errors.⁵

To these "swearing" brethren of the Revolution bench were added others as the sees fell vacant in the normal way. These additions were, in general, made on frankly political grounds and, since the politics of the three reigns before us were predominantly Whig, the new bishops were selected from

1. Sermon 3rd December, 1678.

2. Cobbett "Parl. Hist." vi : 496.

3. Noble "Continuation of Granger's Biographical History" ii : 101n.

4. A Layman "Life of Ken" pp.713 and 603n.

5. Bowles "Life of Ken" p.247.

that party in the Church most favourable to tolerant measures. On the death of Tillotson in 1694 the see of Canterbury fell to Thomas Tenison. His greatness and capacity have frequently been missed, for the eloquence of Tillotson and the brilliance of Wake have somewhat dazzled later generations; but it was the fate of this "heavy man" to fill the primacy of the Church of England throughout a critical phase of its history, and to do so with prudence and consistency. Earlier in William's reign the historian, Gilbert Burnet, went to Salisbury to fill his office with warmth and largeness of heart. Hough, Williams, Gardiner, Talbot, Evans and Humphreys were further appointments of the same reign and each remained consistent in his attitude towards Dissenters. This pleasant sequence broke, however, in the reign of Anne who, in virtue of her Stuart blood and the sharp political reaction that set in, felt safe in admitting Tory churchmen to the bishoprics. Wake, the future primate, Dawes, later of York, Robinson of Bristol and Atterbury, of Convocation fame, all found preferment under Anne, but on George's accession in 1714 the policy of William's time was resumed when Willis, Gibson, Hoadly, Blackburn, Bradford and White Kennett were presented to their sees. It is hardly too much to say that such tolerance as was found in the Established Church in 1727 was mainly due to this singularly transformed bench.

Nor need we doubt that their sentiments in this respect were honourable and sincere. Political their nominations may have been, but this was no new thing in England, and

the integrity of the great and tolerant Latitudinarians was at least comparable with that of Caroline ecclesiastics like Thomas Barlow or William Beaw. Indeed, Bishop Watson of St. David's, "the only English bishop deprived since the Restoration for gross misconduct"¹ had been the creature and nominee of James.

The relevance of the notorious Convocation quarrel lies in the fact that it culminated in the permanent suspension of that body and thereby silenced that party of Churchmen which opposed Dissent of every kind. It followed that the ruling of the Church and the shaping of her policy were more completely left in episcopal hands, and circumstances, as we have seen, had leavened the episcopate with men of tolerant views.

By a verbal agreement in 1664 between Clarendon and Archbishop Sheldon, Convocation had surrendered its traditional right of taxing the clergy for civil purposes. As this had been the only real business that required their sitting, Convocation was allowed to lapse and did not meet again until 1689. In that year William and his friends, intent on the religious comprehension plan, convened the Convocation but the results were so disastrous that the experiment was not again repeated for several years. When the question next arose it did so in a different way, and the furious quarrel that followed rent the English church

1. Sykes "Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century". p.13.

for nearly twenty years. The ablest Churchmen of the time, men like Gibson, Hoadly and Wake, were soon involved, for Convocation in its strange, resurgent effort had found in Francis Atterbury a champion whose ability, in argument at least, could neither be denied nor left alone. That he "was both ambitious and virulent out of measure" we may well believe with Burnet,¹ and Professor Trevelyan² is perhaps correct in thinking that when he left his Oxford headship in 1713 to become Bishop of Rochester and Dean of Westminster "there was more joy in Christ Church Meadows than lower down the Thames"; but that he set in motion forces which might well have been disastrous and guided them with unusual skill, is evident to all. It is true that, in the end, he led the lower clergy to their own destruction and that, embittered by events, he himself overstepped the bounds of prudence in Jacobite intrigues, to find himself impeached and exiled; but, while the controversy lasted it was one of serious moment and nation-wide significance.

"The history of the convocation controversy" writes one eminent authority,³ "presents a problem of difficulty by reason of its complexity." Doubtless, as another⁴ says, "What really was in question was the nature of the State's power over the Church," but for most of the inferior clergy the issue was more concrete and immediate. Many of them, despite the oath of allegiance, were at

1. "Own Times". iv : 448.

2. "Peace and the Protestant Succession" p.127.

3. Sykes - "Church and State in England" p.297.

4. Laski - "Pol. Thought in England" p.78.

heart Nonjurors or even Jacobites, and they saw in Convocation their sole remaining hope of restoring that order in Church and State which was to them the true expression of the Christian faith. It was clearer, too with every day, that the Revolution settlement implied the tolerance of all religions or none. The bishop in his palace, or in his London residence during the sessions of the House of Lords, might think with condescending ease of Atheism, or Dissent, or even discreet Roman Catholicism, but for the working priest, embarrassed as he often was by lack of means, they furnished real problems. The Dissenting Bethel rose beside the Parish Church and the dissenting flock was gathered from the Established fold. For these alarming fears and wrongs there seemed a promise of redress in the new activity of Convocation.

The conflict had its start in 1697 when the "Letter to a Convocation Man" appeared. Whatever part the Jacobite, Sir Benjamin Shower, may have had in its production, there is little doubt that the real author was Francis Atterbury. The opening words declare with fateful accuracy where the issues were to be joined. "Sir", begins this famous letter, "I will be as good as my Word with you, and give you answer to those three questions which you were pleased to put to me in our last conversation: 1. What occasion there is at present for a Convocation? 2. What Law there is, that commands or permits their Sitting and Acting, but the absolute free Pleasure of the Prince? 3. Of what Validity their Acts and Resolutions are, unless confirmed

and approved by Parliament?" In these apparently innocent questions there lay an implicit grievance against the King and much was made of his tyranny in preventing sitting Convocations. When, however, the point of this complaint was lost by renewed summoning of Convocation in the traditional way, Atterbury and his friends went the further step implicit in his third question. They claimed for the Lower House of Convocation, with regard to its business and activities, a virtual independence of king, metropolitan and bench. This independence they asserted with increasing bitterness through many stormy sessions, and were indifferent alike to the canonical accuracy of Gibson, the logic of Hoadly and the historical learning of Wake. The arrogance of Convocation seemed to grow with every year, so that even Queen Anne herself, alleging infringement of her royal supremacy, was moved to reprimand the turbulent presbyters and threaten "to use such means for the punishing offences of this kind as are allowed by law." But the presbyters were undeterred, and continued to assemble, with or without summons, and to proceed with business as they pleased.

The temper of Convocation with regard to heresy and dissent is also to be gathered from the letter which had started the dispute. "I think", proceeds the author¹, "that, if ever there was need of a convocation, since Christianity was established in this Kingdom, there is need

1. "Letter to a Convocation Man" p.2.

of one Now: when such an open looseness in Men's principles and practices and such a settled contempt of religion and the priesthood have prevail'd every where; when heresies of all kinds; when scepticism, deism, and atheism itself over-run us like a deluge; when the mosaick history has by men of your own order been cunningly undermined and exposed, under pretence of explaining it; when the trinity has been as openly denied by some, as the unity of the Godhead sophistically opposed by others; when all mysteries in religion have been denied as impositions on men's understandings, and nothing is admitted as an article of faith but what we can fully and perfectly comprehend; Nay, when the power of the magistrate and of the church is struck at, and the indifference of all religions is endeavoured to be established, by pleas for the justice and necessity of an universal unlimited toleration, even against the sense of the whole legislature: At such a time, and in such an age, you, and I, Sir, and all men that wish well to the interests of religion and the state, cannot but think that there is great need of a convocation." This fairly well describes what the attitude of Convocation was to be for two decades. They were, in fact bitterly, if helplessly, intolerant of all dissent, and from their bitterness came much of that unsettled state that marked the closing years of Anne's reign. Nor was their hatred limited to Romanists and Nonconformists, but looked for victims even among the members of their own church. They roundly condemned in synod sundry works of Whiston, and

Burnet's exposition of the Articles. It was in this direction, however, that they were, strangely enough, to overreach themselves; for it was their attempt to deal with a remarkable sermon preached by Hoadly on 31 March, 1717, that led to their suspension in the following May. Fortunately for toleration this suspension was to last a hundred and fifty years, thus leaving the Whig leaders of the Church to guide her into better ways.

In turning to assess in more detail what these new leaders of the Church contributed to toleration we must remember all the time that there were some among the higher clergy who disliked the doctrine and some among the lower who were free from the prevailing spirit of intolerance. Archbishop Sharp of York, for example, earned preferment in the time of William but not even the well-meant interpretation of his motives by his subsequent biographer can hide the hardness of his heart towards Dissenters. On the other hand, when the convocation fury was reaching its height, a considerable minority left that angry synod and affirmed their loyalty to the episcopal bench. In 1706, Burnet¹ tells us, "The archbishop had prorogued them to the first of March: when that day came, the lower house was surprised with the protestation that was brought to the upper house, by a great part of their body, who, being dissatisfied with the proceedings of the majority, and

1. "Own Times". v : 248.

having long struggled against them, though in vain, at last drew up a protestation against them - - - This was signed by above fifty, and the whole body was but a hundred and forty-five: some were neutral; so that hereby very near one half broke off from the rest, and left them, and sat no more with them." Moreover, we must not expect to find unvarying and uniform enthusiasm for religious liberty even among the liberal bishops and leaders. For most of them it was the best solution of an old and real problem and was, as such, received with varying degrees of cordiality. Nevertheless, the attitude of these Whig Churchmen was of definite significance for toleration in the precarious years that followed 1689.

Their efforts were expressed in three different ways. First of all, they showed throughout a kinder and more genial spirit towards Dissenters than was usual in the average churchman of the time. Already we have seen the moderate ways of Tillotson, the first archbishop of King William's reign, and his much-resented friendships for some leading Nonconformists and "freethinkers". His successor, Thomas Tenison, had been confidently expected "to walk in much the same way, and to tread in the same steps,"¹ and the hope was abundantly fulfilled. In 1689 he had "collected the words and expressions throughout the liturgy, which had been excepted against, and proposed others in their room, which were more clear and plain and less liable

1. Birch "Life of Tillotson". p.424.

to objection."¹ This conciliatory attitude, though fruitless at the moment, was steadily maintained to the end of his long and difficult tenancy of Lambeth, so that on his death in 1715, we are told by Calamy,² he was "more honoured and respected even by the Dissenters than by many of the Established Church." The third archbishop of the period, William Wake, was a very different man but even he had cherished dreams of one united Church in England that would satisfy many who stubbornly remained outside. The other Latitudinarian Bishops were of similar mind. Many of them were themselves of Puritan extraction and could apprehend with sympathetic insight the Dissenting point of view. There were exchanges of a friendly nature which if without result in practice, at least precluded bitterness. John Williams of Chichester, for example, whom Tillotson had called "one of the best men I know, and most unwearied in doing good,"³ brought out a curious book, embodying friendly arguments between Churchmen and Dissenters set forth as a "collection of cases." Such stories, too, as that of Burnet's sending an intimation of the Queen's death on the fateful first day of August, 1714, to the Independent Bradbury in his chapel at Fetter Lane, by the dropping of a handkerchief from the gallery during service, point not only to the warmth of the Bishop's own heart, but symbolize much understanding and desire for peace on many sides. More definite still was the episcopal view on the necessity

1. Ibid. p.190.

2. Calamy - "Life" ii : 334.

3. Birch op.cit. p.228.

of re-baptizing Nonconformists. In 1712 the High Church party had seized upon the matter with typical avidity, asserting with unholy satisfaction the invalidity of all baptisms not performed by episcopally ordained ministers. "This" we are told,¹ "made the dissenters pass for no Christians, and put all thoughts of reconciling them to us far out of view; and several little books were spread about the nation, to prove the necessity of re-baptizing them, and that they were in a state of damnation till that was done." The bishops were obliged to take the matter up, but concluded, almost to a man, "that no baptism (in or with water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) ought to be reiterated." So, too, their calm and steady purpose in the heats and alarms occasioned by the "church in danger" cry, and during the excitement of Sacheverell's impeachment indicates that a new and saner spirit was at work, in some quarters at least, of the National Church. Nor was it confined entirely to the higher circles, for the diary of Thoresby and the Wake papers² furnish many instances of friendly co-operation between less exalted Churchmen and local Nonconformists. By 1732, indeed, the change was so conspicuous that even Swift was moved to acknowledge it, and to ask if it were due to fear of popery or to more serious causes such as the spread of deism or a general indifference.

1. Burnet "Own Times" vi : 116-7.

2. Trevelyan "Blenheim" p.59 n. 67.

In the second place, the Latitudinarians upheld by precept and example the settlement of 1689, and of this a fundamental part was the Toleration Act. The easy criticism which ascribes the lowest motives to the Churchmen of the time has frequently maintained that in this matter they were but supporting that which gave themselves most place and power. It is true that, after 1689, the Protestant succession, Whig policy and the conciliation of Dissenters were closely allied interests; but with regard to the last of these, the Whig bishops might easily have followed less consistent counsels with little personal loss and with warm approval from many quarters. That they steadily refused to do so may suggest that Latitudinarianism sprang from deeper motives than its critics would allow.

So soon as 1692 the able and resourceful Sharp of York came into conflict with Dissenters in his province. "Some of the first difficulties he met with in his diocese," we are told,¹ "were from dissenters taking advantage of the Act of Toleration to break loose, and assume greater liberties than were designed them by the act, or perhaps were justifiable upon any construction of the words of the act. Among other complaints, that of their setting up schools and private academies, was the hardest to find any remedy for. - - - - With respect to one particular academy set up within his diocese, he had the following kind

1. T. Sharp. "Life of Sharp" p.358.

and prudent direction of Archbishop Tillotson, whose letter the reader will not be displeased to have at length.

'Lambeth House,

June 14, 1692.

'My Lord,

Yesterday I received your Grace's letter concerning Mr Frankland, with the copy of an address to your Grace against him. - - - I would send for him, and tell him, that I would never do anything to infringe the Act of Toleration.'

The letter than goes on to give particular advice with reference to the circumstances of the case in point but it is plain that Tillotson accepted the Toleration Act and was prepared to honour it in practice. Here too, his successor Tenison again followed closely in his steps; and though Archbishop Wake showed little tenderness for Dissent in the debates on the repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts in 1719, he was in general, careful to avoid infringement of the Revolution measures. The excellent researches of Professor Norman Sykes have clearly shown that similar motives underlay the policy of Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London. "To his mind 'the distinguishing characteristics of a Whig for thirty years past' had been the maintenance of 'the Protestant Succession, the Church Establishment and the Toleration Act.' He regarded the Toleration Act as sacrosanct, and resisted every attempt to pass beyond its provisions. This attitude was based upon the half-unconscious assumption that the true position of Nonconformity was one of entire subordination to the

interests of the Church."¹ Even this chilly ground was not without its value in an age more fertile in attempts to narrow rather than enlarge the liberties of 1689. Hoadly, too, was firm upon the point, but for somewhat deeper reasons; and by the time of George I even men like Sherlock were content to let the Toleration stand.

It was, however, in the House of Lords, in the debates concerning "occasional conformity", that the majority of the English bishops showed their fixed intention to uphold the Act. After 1689 many who were disqualified on religious grounds from holding certain public offices, began to evade the disability by attending the parish church at least once a year, and by taking the communion according to its forms. Evasions of this kind are doubtless undesirable from every point of view, not least from that of those who were compelled by unjust laws to adopt them; but the discreditable outcry which was raised in England against the practice of "occasional conformity" came less from the desire to purify the public service than from the distorted bitterness against the Nonconformists. It was, indeed, the outcome of the spirit that brought forth the "church in danger" cry, and the melodrama of Sacheverell and his friends. "The High Tories" says Trevelyan² quietly, "did not consider it blasphemy when Freethinkers and rakes of their own party, like St. John, knelt to receive the necessary passport into the Queen's service."

1. Sykes - "Edmund Gibson". p.281.

2. "Blenheim". p.279.

Towards the end of William's reign, it happened that a Presbyterian, Sir Humphrey Edwyne, became Lord Mayor of London. He celebrated the event by riding in state to his Dissenting chapel, preceded by the sword and insignia of London. The incident, as might have been expected, called forth once more the vials of religious wrath. In June, 1702, Sacheverell preached a notorious sermon at Oxford in which, among other things, he railed upon "those insidious persons who can creep to our altars", the Dissenters who sought to qualify for public office by occasional conformity. The fanatical high Churchmen found their champions in the Tory party and henceforth the question came into the affairs of Parliament. A bill to end the practice was successfully promoted in the Lower House during the winter session of 1702 by St. John and Bromley, member for the University of Oxford. In the Lords, however, it had little chance, where Tenison and Burnet, in particular, were stout opponents of the measure. The latter roundly declared in the debate that many people, irrespective of creed, went to church or chapel, whenever they knew the gospel was preached. The practice, in his view, had little danger and might at least be left alone. The outcome was that, by a series of adroit amendments, the measure was effectively killed. The respite was not long for, in December 1703, the Commons again passed a bill to the same effect and carried it in triumph to the Lords. "But all the bustle we had made about it" wrote John Verney, "had no effect. The Bishops, I hear, divided, against it 14, for it 9." The Lords, in

fact, rejected it directly on the second reading by 71 votes to 59. The fourteen bishops were Tenison, Lloyd of Worcester, Burnet, Patrick, Hough, Moore, Cumberland, Gardiner, Williams, Talbot and Evans, with the "proxies" of Humphreys, Fowler and Hall. These fourteen votes were thus decisive for the moment, but the question was by no means settled. Ultimately, in 1711, by a corrupt political bargain, in the high-tide of Toryism that closed the reign of Anne, the Occasional Conformity Bill became law, and this was followed, three years later, by the still more dangerous Schism Bill the effects of which were curiously discounted by what seemed the providential death of the Queen. It was not until December, 1718, that these two measures were taken from the statute book by Stanhope's bill for their repeal, when another significant division of the bishops took place in the Upper House. Queen Anne's bishops with three exceptions¹, were strongly hostile to repeal, while the Whig and Latitudinarian nominees of William III and George were almost unanimous in reverting to the settlement of 1689.

Finally, the Whig Churchmen made some definite, if cautious, efforts to enlarge existing liberties. Some of them, indeed, had confidently expected and desired that something in the nature of King William's "comprehension" scheme would be secured, and thought the Toleration Act too meagre in its scope.² Subsequent events, however, showed

1. These were Tyler, Trimmell and Fleetwood.

2. See above. p. 27.



the wisdom of a moderate initial step, for a definite reaction set in when once the popish James had gone. Yet in spite of this the clearer minds perceived that further steps must follow and in 1709 an interesting occasion was presented by the question of the position of Protestant refugees who had fled to England from the European persecutions. "An act passed in this session, that was much desired," says Burnet,¹ "had been often attempted but had been laid aside in so many former parliaments, that there was scarce any hopes left to encourage a new attempt: it was for naturalizing all foreign protestants, upon their taking the oaths to the government, and their receiving the sacrament in any protestant church. Those who were against the act, soon perceived that they could have no strength, if they should set themselves directly to oppose it; so they studied to limit strangers in the receiving the sacrament, to the way of the church of England. - - - But it seemed the more inviting method to admit of all who were in any protestant communion: this was carried in the house of commons, with a great majority; but all those who appeared for this large and comprehensive way, were reproached for their coldness and indifference in the concerns of the church: and in that I had a large share; as I spoke copiously for it when it was brought up to the lords: the bishop of Chester spoke as zealously against it, for he seemed resolved to distinguish himself as a zealot for that which

1. "Own Times". v : 399.

was called high-church. The bill passed with very little opposition." And, we may add, that subsequent attacks on Protestant refugees were consistently opposed by the same Episcopal champions.

The two opposing forces of high Churchmanship and Latitudinarianism met again on the occasion of the Quaker effort to amend their affirmation formula which they substituted in civil affairs for the usual oath. A particular term had long offended the consciences of stricter Friends, and in 1722 Parliament was asked to grant relief from the use of the phrase. The High-church party, led by Atterbury in the Lords, was vehement in opposition, declaring that the Quakers did not even merit the name of Christian. Petitions against the bill were promoted by many clergy, which suggests considerable feeling on what was a relatively unimportant matter, even if we believe that the signatories to these documents were men who said "Prayers for the richer sort for Threepence-a-time, which is paid, Twopence in Farthings, and a Dish of Coffee."¹ The Whig interest, supported by the more enlightened members of the bench, was strong enough to overcome the outworn protests, and the Quakers were relieved from what they held as sin. But when the "three denominations" of Dissent began to press for freedom from the Test and Corporation Acts the question was more serious. The lesson of Sacheverell's impeachment had been well and truly learned by the Whig party and, thus,

1. "Journal of the Life of Thomas Story" p.757. (1747).

though Walpole thought their claim was reasonable enough, he was not ready to go beyond the passing, in 1727, of what became an annual Indemnity Act, which absolved from legal penalties under the Test Act, such holders of public offices as had not qualified for them by religious conformity. In this, however, he had the advice and warm support of several leading Churchmen, among whom a very prominent figure was that of Benjamin Hoadly.

III. Anglican Doctrine and Practice.

We may observe a tendency among historians to estimate events according to the hardest and most sceptical values of politics and economics. This apparently honest method makes a strong appeal to what is called the "realism" of the modern mind. It is not, then, surprising that churchmen and church affairs have suffered somewhat hardly in the rigours of historical assessment. A realism more informed, however, will not fail to search beneath the outward appearance of succeeding policies for those essential principles which, in the end, commit all serious men to follow in their private and their public lives the course which is both best and nearest truth as they conceive it. We must, in short, examine "that best portion of a good man's life", the often half-unconscious principles of moral and religious faith which are the final motives in the shaping of his actions.

There is, doubtless, ample room for Gibbons and

Macaulays to be cynical about the part which churchmen have at all times played in the long struggle for human freedom. In the period before us, for example, the Established clergy were, in general, only compelled by dire necessity to acquiesce, with whatever grace they could, in the granting of some measure of religious freedom to the Protestant Dissenters. It is safe to say that, except for an important minority, the mass of Anglican churchmen were completely hostile to the new proposals; but it happened that events placed the reins of Anglican power in the hands of this minority which was for the most part, Whig in politics and Latitudinarian by faith. Their rise to power was due to political rather than religious factors, but this does not detract from the significance of the change; and we have now to see what motives led these men to follow with consistency a policy of which religious toleration was a fundamental element, and why this policy was destined to influence the church life of England for so long a time.

In the first place, then, a feature of Anglican church life which bears all the marks of a religious principle, was its constant and determined Protestantism. In its lower and less pleasant aspects this may well have been no more than an inherited and passionate hatred of the Roman church and all its works. For two hundred years the Holy See had done little to commend itself to English hearts, and much, indeed, that might be calculated to irritate and estrange them. Armadas and Gunpowder Plots, Jesuits and Stuart kings, were hardly the most likely means of winning

back the lost affections of any people for a theocratic empire situate beyond the sea. Even were no sermons preached from year to year when 5 November came again, events such as they faithfully "remembered" had now become a part of that traditional spirit which pervades a nation's life. In the memories of living men King James' follies still remained, and kept alive a flame of passion more enduring than the many lights that shone throughout the night that heard the verdict on the seven bishops. Moreover, England was at war with France, and in the minds of many English people Louis of France and Clement of Rome were scarce distinguishable names. Then, too, the exiled Stuarts, the enemies of every dear-born liberty, continued to find help and inspiration at the court of that same foreign king whose ambitions threatened half the states of Europe, and from that same foreign Papacy which had not ceased since Elizabeth's time to plot against the nation. These smouldering fears, however, might have died away as the events which gave them birth receded with the passing years had not the hapless Stuart policy rekindled them to furious life again. In 1708 the first Pretender, carried in the ships of the amused and caustic Forbin, made a farcical attempt to land upon the Scottish coast,¹ and in 1715 came the "first" Jacobite rebellion. In the end, these ill-starred ventures merely served to prejudice the fading chances of a cause already lost, and to unite the

1. Trevelyan. "Ramillies and the Union with Scotland."
pp. 341 seq.

Protestant allegiance which, reluctantly in many cases, had accepted George of Hanover on the death of Anne.

The enthusiasm of the people found an outlet at the times of crisis, in the wrecking of the chapels used by Roman Catholics and in the fervent affirmation of "no popery" on every possible occasion. Indeed, this cry which, "since the Reformation" we are told,¹ "has seldom failed, and probably seldom will fail, to produce an effect in England" was turned to some political account, as in the "church in danger" controversy of 1705 and the general election of 1714.

This anti-Roman sentiment was naturally fed by assiduous pamphleteers who vied with one another in their undisguised hostility. In 1690, for example, "A person of Quality" asserts that he "can see but one possible method to quiet the nation; and that is once and for all to clear it of these monsters, and force them to transport themselves not out of the English dominions, but out of this island."² The forty years that followed saw no lessening of pamphleteer hostility. "If it be lawful", one of them announced, in 1723,³ "and if self-preservation will justify the outlawry and banishment of Papists, it cannot be any injustice to deprive them of but part of their estates; and yet less, to lay on them such a gentle tax as 100,000l. for one year, to help towards defraying the charge the nation is kept at to defend itself against the dangers with which

1. Abbey and Overton. "Eng. Church in Eighteenth Century".
ii : 390.

2. "A Short and Easy Method for the Extirpation of Popery".
Somers Tracts IX ; 463.

3. "Considerations on the Present State of England".

the Papists and their friends threaten it." And if the higher ranks in England were less vocal and less violent, they were not less decided. The great soldier who became the Duke of Marlborough had, Mr Churchill tells us¹, written to William of Orange as early as 4 August, 1688, of his being resolved "to die in that religion that it has pleased God to give you both the will and power to protect"; while Queen Anne herself, on the advent of Villars and his army to the Danube in 1703, assured the anti-Roman section of the Diet of the Empire that "Her Majesty regards herself as the Chief of the Protestant interest."² Thus the Protestant antipathy to the Roman church which in James' time, according to Macaulay,³ had become a "ruling passion even of ploughmen and artisans" was now a mark of polite and respectable society as well.

Within the actual Church itself a similar mind prevailed. The group of "High" Churchmen who went out as the Nonjuring schism in 1690 might not unreasonably have sought the fellowship of English papists with whose political desires they were in full agreement. It is, however, a curious fact that they remained, through all their subsequent sorrows, intensely loyal to the "protestant faith". Their undisguised hostility to popish doctrines was, no doubt, the outcome of a deeper piety than was usually present in their liberal successors, and this may go some distance to explain a certain bitterness that

1. Winston S. Churchill. "Marlborough" 1 : 272.

2. "Blenheim" p.318.

3. "Hist. of Eng."

constantly recurs in all their references to forms and creeds that differed from their own. Thus Sancroft,¹ as we saw, condemned explicitly, in 1688, "the errors, superstitions, idolatries and tyrannies of the Church of Rome" and Dodwell wrote unsparingly of its theology and practices. The moderate Robert Nelson shared their views, and later Nonjurors, such as Leslie and Brett, champions though they were of an outworn loyalty, maintained the early "irreconcilable enmity" to Rome. The Latitudinarians were very different men, but their hostility, if more political in motive, was equally persistent. John Tillotson was fundamentally a Protestant, and so long ago as 1680 had created no small stir in vindication of his faith, while Gilbert Burnet, "much for liberty of conscience" and the abolition of intolerant laws, is yet able to justify his action in supporting further penal measures against the Romanists in 1699. "I was for this bill," he tells us,² notwithstanding my principles for toleration, and against all persecution for conscience sake; I had always thought, that if a government found any sect in religion incompatible with its quiet and safety, it might, and sometimes ought, to send away all of that sect, with as little hardship as possible; It is certain, that as all papists must, at all times, be ill subjects to a protestant prince, so this is much more to be apprehended, when there is a pretended popish heir in the case:" So Thomas Sherlock, preaching

1. See above p. 25.

2. "Own Times" iv : 410.

on 5 November, 1712, before the Lord Mayor of London, declares against the maintenance of any faith by force or persecution but goes on to say that "Whenever a man's conscience leads him to be a Papist it leads him to be an enemy to the constitution of this government"¹ and that, therefore, worldly means may be employed against him. Hoadly, the champion of unlimited toleration, so far as Protestants were concerned, is similarly definite in opposition to the Papists. In an almost lyric passage on a Bill designed to raise "a Summ of Money, for the Publick Use, upon the Estates of English Roman-Catholicks" while he speaks of persecution as "the most Inhumane and Insociable of All Crimes" he warns his readers that in fleeing from this Scylla they should not fall into the opposite Charybdis of "Civil Lethargy, a Shapeless Lump, folded up in the Arms of Slumber; and hung round with every Opiate of Art and Nature." He heartily approves the proposals of the Bill and defends it on the ground of civil necessities for "the Civil State has a Right to be guarded against its Civil Enemies, whatsoever their Outward Garb or Profession of Religion be."² Bishop Gibson also was convinced that with respect to Christians "the destruction of their bodies" was not "a fit means for the salvation of their souls",³ but he remained unshaken in the belief that Roman Catholics had brought their penal burdens upon themselves, and of opinion that while these might be lessened in severity they should

1. Sermon 5 Nov. 1712. Sect.10.

2. Britannicus Letters. XVI. Works iii : 57-58.

3. Sykes, "Edmund Gibson". p.296.

yet in certain cases be rigorously enforced.

From this particular aspect of English Church life there followed two results so far as practical toleration was concerned. In the first place it is clear that Anglicans had no desire at all to ease the burdens placed by law upon the Roman Catholics. In the reigns of William, Anne and George new measures were imposed upon them and, as we have seen, the leading Churchmen did not merely acquiesce but helped materially in carrying them through. The other consequence was that many Anglicans, prompted by their papist fears, were led to seek more friendly terms with other reformed bodies. This was evident in the considerable correspondence that went on between such men as Wake and leaders of the Continental churches, including that of France, where 'Gallicanism' was a prominent feature of the time. This, however, did not always mean a similar cordiality towards the Protestant Dissenters at home. Archbishop Sharp of York, for example, was an active participant in these foreign adventures but remained decidedly unfriendly to the Nonconformists of his own diocese. In general, however, there is little doubt that anti-Roman feeling in the Church of England leaders did contribute to a softening of their attitude to those "not of this fold" in the nation itself, and thereby helped that tenderness towards Dissenters which Dean Swift observed in 1732. Anglicans, on the whole, felt with Marlborough that war abroad necessitated peace at home, and thus, if not enthusiastic champions of full religious liberty, they

were not prepared to offer such resistance to the movement as otherwise they might have done.

In the next place, it is clear that the particular type of doctrine which increasingly prevailed within the Church of England after 1689 implied the toleration of Dissent where such Dissent was not subversive of normal social life. This doctrine earned and has retained what one of its distinguished exponents, Bishop Fowler of Gloucester, called "the foot-and-a-half-long word, LATITUDINARIAN."¹

Latitudinarianism was, essentially, an effort to establish the Christian faith upon a basis of philosophy and reason rather than on those external authorities which had no better claims to be accepted than a widespread custom or a long tradition. This motive had, in fact, inspired the Reformation long ago, though at the start it was not seen by all. As time went on, however, and the early zeal was followed by reflection, it began to dawn on many minds that some authoritative voice was needed to declare the words of life which were no more received from an unbroken catholic Church. This voice was found in Scripture, first of all, and thus the Bible, in the classic words of Chillingworth, became the sole religion of Protestants. But the Reformation spirit had not yet fulfilled its course, for this transferring of authority

1. M. Noble "Continuation of Granger's History." 11 : 87.

was but a half-way step, the placing of a book where once a church had been. It thus devolved upon the "men of latitude", who came to power with William III. to take the further step and seek the sanctions of religious faith in human reason and experience. Authorities that once were found sufficient, the practice of the early Church, the teaching of the Fathers, decrees of Councils, the Holy Scriptures, might still contribute much of value for the Christian life, but what they gave must first be reconciled with what the eighteenth century found "reasonable".

There is no doubt that this theology was largely shaped by that wider spirit of enquiry which brought forth the science of Boyle and Isaac Newton and the excellent philosophy of Locke. It is possible, too that it was much affected by the errors that it sought to overcome, learning from, even while it wrestled with, the Deism and "Atheism", the Arianism and Socinianism of the time. Nor was it altogether insensible to changing outward circumstances. The Protestant who made "the Bible only" his religion might suspect that taking oaths to William of Orange did not well agree with the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, but he might also feel that the reason which condoned the one might furnish likewise a religious faith whereby English common-sense in practice might be joined to peace of mind and ease of conscience. Yet all these factors in themselves might well have failed to furnish this significant and brilliant school had not liberal theology been native to the soil of England. The way had

been effectively prepared by Cambridge Platonists and writers such as Hales and Falkland of Great Tew. Still earlier, other voices had been heard in the wilderness of superstition. Erasmus,¹ for example, writing to the Archbishop of Mayence, had urged the Church to be content with the merest residue of dogma, and to let her children think on other matters as they pleased, while Lanfranc² seems to have assured the monks of Canterbury that so long as faith and virtue were preserved they needed not to be concerned about minor differences in usage. The important point, however, is that now what had so often been regarded as heretical and dangerous had settled in the seats of power and might effect in practice what it believed in theory. It is suggested that the doctrine, in its full acceptance, had far-reaching implications for religious liberty, and we may be allowed to seek those implications in what still remain the classics of Latitudinarianism, the sermons and polemics of Tillotson and Hoadly.

"The study of eighteenth century sermons" says Sir Leslie Stephen,³ "is not exhilarating. We know from sufficient testimony that they really impressed our forefathers. - - - But no one, unless he were confined to a desert island with no other form of literature at hand, could really affect to read them with pleasure". These words can hardly be applied to the sermons of Archbishop Tillotson, who though living and dying in the seventeenth

1. Froude "Short Studies on Great Subjects". 1 : 81.
2. R.W. Church. "Saint Anselm". pp.50-51. (1888).
3. "Hist. of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century".
ii : 337.

century, was in spirit and in influence entirely of the eighteenth. The style which won the praise of Dryden and Addison¹ may still be read with ample pleasure and considerable profit. Moreover, his consistent elegance of language did not take away from the persuasive quality of his utterances. While serving as a curate to the vicar of Cheshunt so long before as 1662, it seems that "here Mr. Tillotson - - by his mild and gentle behaviour, and persuasive eloquence, prevailed with an old Oliverian soldier, who preached among the Anabaptists in that town in a red coat, and was much followed, to desist from that and betake himself to some other employment".² This early talent for persuasion found a wider field in those assemblies, containing clergy as well as laymen, which in after years attended on his ministry. Their numbers were, indeed, so great as to compare, in Horace Walpole's³ view, with those vast throngs which later flocked to Whitefield's preaching. In brief, Archbishop Tillotson laid down the lines which English preachers were to follow, in style and substance, for several generations to come.

In the Preface to an early volume of his sermons there appeared a declaration of his purpose which may fittingly precede the several volumes of his later works. "The design of these discourses" we are told⁴ is fourfold. First, To show the unreasonableness of atheism, and of

1. Works ed. Birch (1820) i : 235-6. Also in Birch's "Life of Tillotson" (1752) p.362.
2. Birch op. cit. p.16 (p.24 in 1752 edition).
3. "Letters" ed. Toynbee, i : 219.
4. "Works" ed. Birch. i : 295.

scoffing at religion; which I am sorry is so necessary to be done in this age. - - Secondly, To recommend religion to men from the great and manifold advantages which it brings both to public society and to particular persons. - - Thirdly, To represent the excellency, more particularly, of the Christian religion; and to vindicate the practice of it, from the suspicion of those grievous troubles and difficulties which many imagine it to be attended withal. - - Fourthly, To persuade men to the practice of this holy religion, from the great obligation which the profession of Christianity lays upon men to that purpose; and, more particularly, from the glorious rewards of another life."

We may observe that, on the whole, he carried out his plan with great success. For our immediate purposes, however, the significance of these proposals lies in the supreme importance they attach to reason in matters of religion. Henry More¹, the Platonist, had spoken of "that special prerogative of Christianity that it dares appeal to reason." In this direction Tillotson did more than honour to his teachers. "Religion" he asserts², "begins in the understanding, and from thence descends upon the heart and life...We must first know God, before we can worship him; and understand what is His Will, before we can do it. This is so very evident, that one would think there needed no discussion about it." Moreover, reason is the final test of doctrine and experience. On the question of the

1. Henry More. Gen. Preface 3.

2. Works ed. Birch. ii : 520.

truth or falsity of dogmas he remarks:¹ "For the clearing of this I shall lay down the following proposition: That reason is the faculty whereby revelations are to be discerned; or, to use the phrase in the text, it is that whereby we are to judge, what spirits are of God, and what not... Whatever doctrines God reveals to men are propounded to their understandings, and by this faculty we are to examine all doctrines which pretend to be from God, and upon examination to judge whether there be reason to receive them as divine, or to reject them as impostures." The obvious effect of such pronouncements was to lead enquiring minds, those which, by nature, "*novis rebus studebant*", to demand whose reason was to make such vital judgments? Tillotson's high sense of practical responsibility might lead him to reply that each must be content to reason for himself alone, and he goes on to say²: "Nor do I so far extend this liberty of judging in religion, as to think every man fit to dispute the controversies of religion. A great part of people are ignorant, and of so mean a capacity, as not to be able to judge of the force of a very good argument, much less of the issue of a long dispute; and such persons ought not to engage in disputes of religion; but to beg God's direction and to rely upon their teachers." This is, doubtless, prudent, but does not say who is to be the final judge of ignorance and incapacity to reason in his fellow men. In the end there is but one escape from this familiar regress

1. Works ii : 257.

2. Works ii : 266.

into which so many systems fall, and that is to concede to individual men the right of private judgment. Here then, we meet the real problem that confronted liberal Churchmen in the reigns of William, Anne and George; for it was just this exercise of private judgment which had ringed the Church of England with every kind of militant Dissent, and raised the question from an academic interest to an immediate practical concern.

Two questions thrust themselves on all responsible divines. First, what judgment could be made on those who, exercising private judgment in sincerity, had reached conclusions so divergent from their own; and, second, what means they might consistently adopt in seeking to reclaim them from their errors? In answering these, for all the caution he maintained in practical affairs, it is clear that Tillotson acknowledged the implications of his fundamental principle. As to question one, he held that very many people must by circumstance be totally unqualified to make supreme and vital judgments for themselves. In consequence they must, in some degree, depend for guidance on those whom they regard as wiser than themselves; "and it is really much wiser and safer for them so to do." He then proceeds:¹ "Such persons, if they be modest and humble, and pray earnestly to God for His assistance and direction, and are careful to practise what they know, and to live up to the best light and

1. Works IV : 78.

knowledge which they have, shall not miscarry merely for want of those further degrees of knowledge which they have no capacity nor opportunity to attain, because their ignorance is unavoidable, and God will require no more of them than He hath given them, and will not call them to account for the improvement of those talents which He never committed to them. And if they be led into any dangerous error, . . . God will not impute it to them as a fault; because in the circumstances in which they were they took the best and wisest course that they could to come to the knowledge of the truth by being willing to learn what they could of those whom they took to be wiser than themselves." But it was precisely such sincere endeavours after truth which, for good or ill, had led to the formation of Dissenting sects in well nigh every English parish.

In answering question two, though Tillotson observes¹ that "he that hath an honest mind, and would do the will of God if he knew it, God will not suffer him to remain ignorant of it, or to be mistaken about it in any necessary point of faith or practice", he is well aware that the Church's function in the world involves much more than passive faith.

But if religion starts and ends in reason, what methods may be used by Churchmen in recalling men to truth? The answer, clearly stated, is 'Persuasion'. "I can" he says², "present nothing beyond this to your affections to

1. Works V : 36. From Sermon 87, on John VII : 17.

2. Works I : 389.

excite your love and desire. All that can be done is to set the thing before men and to offer it to their choice; and if men's natural desire of wisdom and knowledge, and happiness, will not persuade them to be religious, it is in vain to use arguments; if the sight of these beauties will not charm men's affections, it is to no purpose to go about to compel a liking, and to urge and push forward a match, to the making whereof consent is necessary.

Religion is a matter of our freest choice, and if men will obstinately and wilfully set themselves against it there is no remedy. '*Pertinaciae nullam remedium posuit Deus*' God has provided no remedy for the obstinancy of men: - but if they will choose to be fools, and to be miserable, He will leave them to inherit their own choice, and to enjoy the portion of sinners." Whatsoever value, then, had lain in faggot or in penal law, at last it is declared that these are wholly inconsistent with the spirit of the Christian faith.

High Churchmen like George Hickes and Sacheverell saw clearly where these conclusions led and were unsparing in denouncing them. They seized upon the Primate's long and cordial friendships with some eminent "Freethinkers" and Dissenters to suggest that he himself was atheist at heart. "He was" says Leslie,¹ "owned by the atheistical wits of all England as their true primate and apostle." For all that, his influence increased among his brethren of the

1. Leslie: Works ii : 596 (1832).

bench and with the clergy as a whole, while his teaching met with warm approval from such laymen as Locke and Somers. He had many imitators and disciples in the generation that came after him. Many of them, doubtless, as Warburton¹ seems to think, developed his opinions to excess, and this, perhaps, is very true of Benjamin Hoadly, most distinguished of them all, who exercised the function of a bishop for close on fifty years. We may admit with friend and foe that Hoadly's conduct in his several sees was shockingly neglectful, and, with Sir Leslie Stephen,² that "His style is the style of a bore; he is slovenly, awkward, intensely pertinacious, often indistinct, and, apparently at least, evasive; and occasionally not free from a tinge of personal rancour;" but it is also true that no historian of the time has found it possible to pass him or leave his work alone. His practical activities we have already seen, and here it will suffice to note his contribution to that liberal doctrine which inspired a less contentious spirit in certain quarters of the Hanoverian Church of England.

The distant see of Bangor fell to Hoadly's care in 1715, and, two years later, gave its name to that remarkable dispute by which he will for ever be remembered. The Bangorian Controversy, however, was not an isolated happening either in the religious life of England or in the political career of its chief protagonist. It was,

1. "Doctrine of Grace" Bk.III, Ch.III. Works viii : 443. (1811).

2. "Hist. of Eng. Thought in Eighteenth Century". ii : 153.

in fact, a phase of that drawn-out dispute which the events of 1689 had precipitated between two conflicting sets of opinions. The hereditary King had been replaced by the virtual nominee of Parliament, and the Nonjuring Churchmen by Whig and Latitudinarian divines who, of necessity, abandoned once for all the doctrines of passive obedience and the divine right of kings. In consequence, the new administrations in State and Church were called on, for a generation or more, to defend the Revolution settlement from attacks by Jacobites and Nonjurors. To this task Hoadly had applied himself with competence and zeal for several years before he preached the sermon which inspired the famous controversy. In the end the original issues were lost in a vast confusion of irrelevant details, but we may gather from the 'general wreck'¹ that Hoadly's main objective was to strip the Church and its ministers of pretentious claims to supernatural authority to which, with ample reason, he ascribed the greater part of the sorrows and intolerance which previous years had seen. In carrying out his task, he, here and there, reveals his deeper views on faith and order, and some of these are of supreme importance for the question that concerns us here.

It is clear, for instance, that he does not merely follow but goes far beyond Archbishop Tillotson in founding all belief on human reason and in admitting the necessity for universal private judgement. For him,

1. Sir L. Stephen. op.cit. ii : 157.

however, as for Tillotson before him, there remained the awkward fact that exercise of this undoubted right by different minds had led to numerous conclusions which, in many cases, frankly contradicted one another. What, then, could an English bishop say of those who, exercising private judgement, had arrived among the Deists or Dissenters? Hoadly does not hesitate to go the further mile but states that sincerity alone is asked of men by God. "The favour of God, therefore," he writes¹ "follows Sincerity, considered as such. And consequently, equally follows every Equal Degree of Sincerity." It is true that Hoadly "did not envy them a Pleasure" who acted on this maxim which from any Christian point of view would probably be called extreme; but in the heat of controversy qualifications tend to disappear while the principle they modify assumes an ever growing prominence. It is not hard to see with Law and Sherlock that to organize "the church", as they conceived it, on sincerity alone was to build on shifting sand, but for those who sought religious freedom an episcopal pronouncement such as this had very great significance. If one thing might with confidence be claimed for ejected ministers and persecuted laymen of the seventeenth century and for Nonconformists generally in the eighteenth, it was a very deep sincerity. In Hoadly's view this should atone for many failings and be acceptable to God; and whom God received it was difficult for His

1. Hoadly "works" 1 : 593. ("Preservative").

servants to censure or reject.

Hoadly's own position as a bishop, no less than the particular course into which the controversy fell, compelled him to examine the nature and authority of "the Church". His conclusions were set forth in the famous Bangorian Sermon, preached on 31 March 1717 which, according to Professor Norman Sykes¹, "reduced the visible church to ruins, and enthroned in its place the principle of unlimited private judgement." This may be true if we regard the church as the historic Anglican Establishment, but we must remember that when Hoadly sees it as what may be called an 'invisible' association, presumably of the sincere, he is approaching an ideal of the church which inspired hundreds of Independent and Baptist congregations throughout the land. As to the authority that such a body might assume to exercise upon its own members or towards "those without" he reaches some explicit and significant decisions. The supreme authority is vested in the absent Christ who is, he maintains "Himself the sole Law-giver to his Subjects, and himself the sole Judge of their Behaviour, in the Affairs of Conscience and Eternal Salvation. And in this Sense therefore, His Kingdom is not of this World; that He hath, in those Points, left behind Him, no visible, humane Authority; no Vicegerents, who can be said properly to supply his Place; no Interpreters, upon whom his Subjects are absolutely to depend; no Judges over the Consciences

1. "Church & State in the Eighteenth Century". p.293.

or Religion of his People. For if this were so, that any such absolute Vicegerent Authority, either for the making new Laws, or interpreting Old ones, or judging his Subjects, in Religious Matters, were lodged in any Men upon Earth; the Consequence would be, that what still retains the Name of the Church of Christ, would not be the Kingdom of Christ, but the Kingdom of those Men, vested with such Authority. For, whoever hath such an Authority of making Laws, is so far a King: and whoever can add new Laws to those of Christ, equally obligatory, is as truly a King, as Christ himself is: Nay, whoever hath an absolute Authority to interpret any written, or spoken Laws; it is He, who is truly the Law-giver, to all Intents and Purposes; and not the Person who first wrote, or spoke them."¹

Four years later, in a sermon preached before the King, Hoadly re-affirmed the doctrine that all authority in faith and order is finally vested in Christ alone. "To Him" he says,² "the last Appeal is justly made. He is qualified for the Office, being perfectly knowing, wise, and good; perfectly free from all Bias and Prejudice; fully acquainted with every Particular necessary to the forming a right Judgement; and fully disposed to make all fitting and reasonable Allowances, for his Creatures and Servants; and none, but such are so. And this Office peculiarly belongs to Him, as he Himself has declared; He being the Master, who will call every individual Servant to give up his own

1. "The Nature of the Kingdom or Church of Christ".

Works ii : 404.

2. Works. iii : 719.

Account; to be judged according to his own Capacity; his own Talents; his own Opportunities; and not according to those of other Men, or according to the Humours and Passions of Others of his Fellow-servants. And this being declared to be the Province of God himself, in order to deter Us from meddling with it; how should it affect Us to consider, that whatever rash, hasty, ungrounded, prejudiced, uncandid, Judgement, We pass upon our Neighbour, for what perhaps, he, in the Simplicity of his Heart, believes to be Service to God, and to Christ: We invade the Province of God; usurp his Dominion; exalt Ourselves into Gods over our Brethren; and, like the Man of Sin, exalt Ourselves to a Dignity and Office which is the sacred Prerogative of God himself, who alone knoweth the Hearts of Men!"

In addition to this principle Hoadly reaches other two conclusions which experience no less than reason had made lamentably plain. In the first place, men were totally unfitted to judge their fellows much less persecute them for their opinions, inasmuch as they themselves could make no claim to infallibility. "This is, indeed, a strong Consideration, against our assuming to Ourselves the Office of Judging Others, That We are void of all those Qualifications, which are requisite to our judging aright about Them; and particularly, with regard to their Religious Conduct; in which we are most apt to exercise this Dominion over them. For, being Ourselves weak and fallible, and often passionate Men, We are so easily imposed upon and

misled; so insensibly and even undesignedly prejudiced; so little acquainted with the first Springs of Action in Others; so wholly Strangers to the inward Thoughts and Designs of their Hearts; so unable to know all the several Circumstances that ought to be thrown into the Balance; (their Education; the unavoidable Bias put upon their Minds, before They were able to think for Themselves; their natural Tempers; their Inducements and Motives;) and so unwilling to make all those necessary and due Allowances, which We always expect in our own Case: That, on all these, and many more Accounts, who would venture so far out of his Depth, as to declare, or insinuate, any thing concerning not only the evil Designs of Others, but their Unacceptableness to God; who have no other apparent and visible Mark of wilful Evil upon Them, but their differing, in some Opinions, or circumstantial Practices, from Ourselves?¹ In the second place he states the obvious truth that coercive methods in religion cannot in the nature of the case achieve their end. Instances of Torment or Misery, he maintains,² when "applied to this Purpose, even if it were in Favour of the plainest Proposition in Mathematics, would, in the natural Tendency of Things, be so far from inclining, either a generous or a perverse Mind, to the real Belief of it, that They would create an Adverseness to, and Hatred of, a Point, which stands in need of such Methods of Support. And, supposing that Weariness under Evils, at Length shall

1. Works iii : 717.

2. *ibid.* iii : 767.

make Men profess such Points to be true, as They cannot believe to be so: this is, in Those who make use of such Methods to this Purpose, the Great Crime of ensnaring their Fellow-creatures into Hypocrisy, and in the End, perhaps into Atheism itself; into a Contempt of every Thing truly good, and a Disregard of what is True, and what is False. So that I should not doubt to say, that All the Inward Infidelity and Atheism, that is in the Hearts of so many Men, in those Countries, where Persecution is openly avowed, is in great Measure owing to that Persecution, which pretends to root it out; and will be charged upon the Persecutors themselves, by the Great Judge of the World, when He shall come, to bring to Light the hidden Things of Darkness, and to make manifest the Councils of the Heart." Such statements might be multiplied indefinitely to indicate his views, but these sufficiently express the general position which evoked the furious Bangorian Controversy, and it is clear that, however inadequate much of his reasoning may be, that position could not possibly admit of repressive or coercive methods in the practice of religion. Hoadly's influence, in fact, was greater than his reasoning or his popularity might suggest, for his essential doctrines had definitely established themselves in the best religious thought of his day.

In the end, perhaps, it may be said that Hoadly was important for his warm personal inclinations with regard to Dissenters as much as for his reasoning which implied

their toleration. "Sherlock maintained" observes Sir Leslie Stephen,¹ "whilst Hoadly denied, that Protestant dissenters should be excluded from certain offices of profit and privilege. And thus a dispute, stated in the most abstract terms, dwindled down to a squabble over the Test and Corporation Acts. Sherlock tries to prove that the sacrament is not desecrated by being used with a test, and that there is a broad distinction between positive penalties and negative disqualifications. The result was characteristic of the whole dispute. The Test Act survived the Bangorian controversy for more than a century but an Act of Indemnity was regularly passed, after a few years, until its final repeal. The legislature, like the controversialists, affirmed a general principle, and took care that it should have no practical effect." It is, however, something even to admit a principle and, in any case, the Indemnity Act of 1727 had considerable effect in shaping the political affairs of the eighteenth century.

Side by side with Protestant enthusiasm and Latitudinarian doctrine there appeared about this time another and very pleasant aspect of religious life to which some reference should, perhaps, be made. This was the remarkable attention which was turned to philanthropic activities. In the opinion of Professor G. N. Clark,² "The forces which were bringing into being the great

1. "Hist. of Eng. Thought in Eighteenth Century" ii : 165.
 2. "The Later Stuarts". p.151.

humanitarian movements of the eighteenth century were deeper and wider than the disputes of sects, as wide as the desire for reasonableness which was appeasing the wranglings about creeds." It is difficult to say how far such activities became common meeting ground for Churchmen and Dissenters, though, doubtless, as when Tillotson supported Thomas Goudge in Wales, there were occasions when good men were greater than their doctrines. It is clear, however, that the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, founded in 1698, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts which followed in 1701 were designed by Anglicans for Anglican ends. If Churchmen and Dissenters found a common sphere in the various societies for "the Reformation of Manners" which came into being after 1691, it may have been on somewhat negative and dangerous ground. "These societies", according to Professor Clark,¹ "to which both Anglicans and Dissenters belonged, in spite of much criticism, were active up and down the country in prosecuting poor persons for moral offences."

The truth seems to be that philanthropic activity inclined to fall within sectarian lines, for, as we shall see, both Dissenters and Roman Catholics had their own organisations. But it is possible, for all that, to believe that the turning of attention to these worthier objects of the Christian faith absorbed the zeal which, in other ages, had been spent in over nice examinations of

1. op.cit. p.153.

belief and in imputing heresy to all whose views diverged from the accepted creed.

Finally, then, it may be said, that all these aspects of a new religious outlook which was slowly gaining ground within the Church of England, were intrinsically connected; and if they did not actively promote religious liberty they did, at least, remove the very grounds on which intolerance had always rested.

DISSENT AND ITS CLAIMS.

Once, in Galilee, St. Luke¹ informs us, "John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us." The major application of such calm and reasoned teaching is too obvious to call for any comment, but here we may observe that the early "independent" whose endeavours called it forth has left no record of the incident as it appeared to him. A similar indifference to the possible curiosity of later times appears to be a mark, in every age, of those who follow independent lines and, consequently, they are often judged by the evidence of hostile pens. The records of the early English Nonconformists, for example, are totally inadequate to the part they played in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By 1689 this grave omission had been somewhat remedied but, even so, the body of their writings is not to be compared for continuity and detail with that of the Established Church. Again we may observe that while John, so far, had met but one who cast out devils their number in King William's reign was truly legion. They came from North and South and East and West to do God's will as they conceived it. Moreover, when they came, they did not form a single Christian unit. Between the rigid Roman Catholics and the sincere believers

1. Luke ix : 49-50.

"in God alone,

Likewise in Reeve and Muggleton"

there were innumerable groups and differences of view. Their only common bond was a not surprising hatred of a State Church which had set aside the methods of her Founder for those of bigotry and fear. From what remains of these Dissenting groups we have to judge what valid claims they had to toleration, and what they did to realize these claims. We must in fact, determine whether they were truly casting forth devils or merely hindering the Church of England in what, presumably, was her appointed task as well.

I. The Traditions of Dissent.

The Act of Toleration was avowedly a measure for "exempting Their Majesties protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of certain laws," and, after setting forth the oaths and declarations which were deemed essential to the safety of the Revolution settlement, proceeds in Section VII: "Be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that no person dissenting from the Church of England in holy orders, or pretended holy orders, or pretending to holy orders, nor any preacher or teacher of any congregation of dissenting protestants, that shall make and subscribe the declaration aforesaid, and take the said oaths, at the general or quarter sessions of the peace to be held for the county, town, parts, or division where such person lives, which court is hereby impowered to administer the same; and shall also declare his

approbation of, and subscribe the articles of religion mentioned in the statute made in the 13th. year of the reign of the late queen Elizabeth, except the 34th, 35th, and 36th, and these words of the 20th article, viz. (the church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies and authority in controversies of faith, and yet), shall be liable to any of the pains or penalties mentioned in an act made on the 17th year of the reign of king Charles II. intituled, an act for restraining nonconformists from inhabiting in corporations; nor the penalties mentioned in the aforesaid act made in the 22nd year of his said late majesty's reign, for or by reason of such persons preaching at any meeting for the exercise of religion. Nor to the penalties of 100L. mentioned in an act made in the 13th and 14th of king Charles II. intituled, an act for the uniformity of public prayers, and administering of Sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies; and for establishing the form of making, ordaining, and consecrating of bishops, priests, and deacons, in the church of England, for officiating in any congregation for the exercise of religion permitted and allowed by this act."¹ The liberty of prophesying implicit in these words was dependent on meticulous recording in the general or quarter sessions of compliance with these regulations, and was not to be exercised behind locked or bolted doors. Dissenting worship was, in fact, only permitted "Provided always, that no congregation, or assembly for religious

1. I Will. & Mary cap. 18.

worship, shall be permitted or allowed by this act, until the place of such meeting shall be certified to the bishop of the diocese or to the archdeacon of that archdeaconry, or to the justices of the peace, at the general or quarter sessions of the peace for the county, city, or place, in which such meetings shall be held, and registered in the said bishop's or archdeacon's court respectively, or recorded at the said general or quarter sessions, the register or clerk of the peace whereof respectively, is hereby required to register the same, and to give certificate thereof to such person as shall demand the same, for which there shall be no greater fee or reward taken than the sum of six pence."¹ It is clear that Toleration rather than religious liberty was aimed at in the act, since all the persecuting laws, and especially the Test and Corporation Acts, remained as they had been. It was, at best, a grudging ease and clearly some more lasting settlement had yet to be secured.

The attainment of this end so far as Protestant Dissenters were concerned was probably retarded by the very tenacity with which they sought to maintain their several distinctive principles. Some notice, therefore, must be taken of convictions and events which had given rise, by 1689, to four main bodies of Dissenters, the Presbyterians, the Congregationalists, the Baptists and the Quakers. In its beginnings Presbyterianism was not sectarian in the

1. Sect. XVIII.

sense in which that term is commonly understood and even after 1689 the place it occupied in England was one of necessity rather than of choice. Its inspiration was the system of John Calvin and it had remarkable acceptance in Scotland and in Holland. In many ways it was a theocratic system and had, as will appear, as little liking for sectarian differences as the Episcopacy of Charles I. and Laud.

There were, it seems, men of Presbyterian views among the Anglican clergy long before a Presbyterian party can be said definitely to have appeared. As a party they came into prominence during the political crisis which resulted in the Civil War. An ordinance to replace the Episcopal hierarchy in the Church of England by a system of presbyteries and synods was approved by Parliament on 12 June 1643.

At that same date the Westminster Assembly, which has left such notable memorials to the piety and learning of its members,¹ also came into being. This assembly held its sessions in the Abbey which supplied it with a name, and from which, it may be noted, the body of its first prolocutor, Dr. William Twisse, Rector of Newbury, was exhumed and desecrated at the Restoration as witness, doubtless, that the Reign of the Saints was over.

The exigencies of the Civil War impelled the Parliament to look for help to Scotland. A deputation headed by Sir

1. e.g. The Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

Harry Vane, Stephen Marshall and Philip Nye, the Independent, went to Edinburgh with the result that the Solemn League and Covenant was presented to Parliament and to the Westminster Assembly and signed by the members of both bodies in St. Margaret's Church on 25 September, 1643. By its second Article¹ they affirmed "that we shall in like manner, without respect of persons, endeavour the extirpation of popery, prelacy (that is, Church government by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors and commissaries, deans, deans and chapters, archdeacons and all other ecclesiastical officers depending on that hierarchy), superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found to be contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness, lest we partake in other men's sins, and thereby be in danger to receive of their plagues; and that the Lord may be one, and His name one in the three kingdoms." By this the Parliamentary party was virtually committed to a Presbyterian Establishment even though "The sermon of the day, preached by the brilliant and dissenting Nye, forcibly expressed the view that the action of Parliament could in no sense be interpreted as binding England to the adoption of the Presbyterian system."² On 14 March, 1646, the sentiments implicit in the Covenant were given practical effect by a measure designed to set up Presbyterian forms in the Church of England; but the

1. Gee and Hardy, "Documents Illustrative of English Church History" p.571.

2. W. K. Jordan, "The Development of Religious Toleration in England" iii : 47.

religious temper was already showing signs of change. "One is tempted to say" writes¹ Dr. Jordan, "that the only thing lacking for the Presbyterian Church was Presbyterians. The enthusiasm of Parliament for the Presbyterian order fluctuated almost as if by a physical law with the political pressure which the Scots could bring to bear. An important outpost had been won by the Presbyterians, but the trenches of the opposition remained to be carried." The Independents had become increasingly apprehensive that "new Presbyter was but old Priest writ large" and as Cromwell's army was decidedly of Independent sympathy the short-lived triumph of the English Presbyterians came to an end when Cromwell and his soldier friends at last became supreme in the State.

On the abdication of Richard Cromwell the Presbyterians once more enacted a decisive part in lending their support to the restoration of Charles II. This remarkable man had assured them "that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matter of religion, which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom; and that we shall be ready to consent to such an Act of Parliament as, upon mature deliberation, shall be offered to us, for the full granting that indulgence."² Efforts thereupon were started to effect a "comprehension", notably at the Savoy Conference, the results of which we have already seen. The

1. op. cit. iii : 80.

2. Decl. of Breda, 14 April, 1660. Gee and Hardy, op. cit. p.587.

fair promises of Charles were, however, lightly set aside and instead of tolerant legislation came the Act of Uniformity on 19 May, 1662, declaring¹ that "in regard that nothing conduces more to the settling of the peace of this nation (which is desired of all good men), nor to the honour of our religion, and the propagation thereof, than an universal agreement in the public worship of Almighty God; and to the intent that every person within this realm may certainly know the rule to which he is to conform in public worship, and administration of sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, and the manner how and by whom bishops, priests, and deacons are and ought to be made, ordained, and consecrated; be it enacted by the king's most excellent majesty, by the advice and with the consent of the Lords spiritual and temporal, and of the Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that all and singular ministers in any cathedral, collegiate, or parish church or chapel, or other place of public worship within this realm of England, dominion of Wales, and town of Berwick-upon-Tweed, shall be bound to say and use the Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, celebration and administration of both the sacraments, and all other the public and common prayer, in such order and form as is mentioned in the said book annexed and joined to this present Act." All ministers of the Church of England were required to attest their approval of everything within

2. Gee and Hardy, op. cit. p.603.

the Book of Common Prayer (the alterations to which many had not even seen) before St. Bartholomew's Day, 24 August 1662, or to forfeit all claims to office and emolument. The number who preferred the latter course is variously given. The Act of Uniformity seems to have affected directly about 936 of the ablest ministers, but the causes which had produced the Act had already affected 695 and if we add to these 129 who lost their livings after 1662 the total would seem to be about 1760¹. Of these, perhaps two thirds were Presbyterians. The records of the time give moving instances of hardships thus endured by ministers and their families. Baxter says their children died of enteric through drinking water instead of the small ale on which they had been bred.² On this we need not linger, for Dissenting ministers were to suffer more disastrous ills when the Conventicle and Five Mile Acts had added to their sorrows. The case of Baxter himself who was three times brought before the sessions in 1664, and that of William Jenkyn who died in Newgate jail, are typical of many others less well known who suffered for conscience sake before the Act of Toleration brought relief.

The Presbyterian attitude to Toleration is difficult to judge for it would seem to have been modified as the fortunes of the party changed. Theirs was essentially a "church" system and this fact which has lain so often at the root of Anglican and Roman intolerance was not without

1. A. G. Matthews "Calamy Revised" p.xiii. (1934)
2. Baxter. Reliquiae iii : 4.

effect on the Presbyterians. After the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant the further step was taken of providing for its general imposition under penalty of fines, though Baxter and some others were uneasy about the proceeding. There is little doubt that the new forms, had they established themselves, would not have tolerated all kinds of religious dissent. Moreover this intolerance would probably have extended to morals as well as doctrine and worship. The Lancashire Presbyterians declared in 1648 that "A Toleration would be the putting of a sword into a madman's hand: a cup of poison into the hand of a child: a letting loose of mad men with firebrands in their hands; an appointing a City of refuge in mens consciences for the devil to fly to; a laying of the stumblingblock before the blind; a proclaiming liberty to the wolves to come into Christs fold to prey upon his lambs."¹ This doubtless gave extreme expression to the rigid Presbyterian view, but that it had some general acceptance may with justice be inferred from other sources. "The Presbyterian hierarchy," says Daniel Neal,² for example, "was as narrow as the prelatical; and as it did not allow a liberty of conscience, claiming a civic as well as ecclesiastical authority over men's persons and properties, it was equally, if not more, insufferable." The opinions thus expressed by Daniel Neal have found acceptance in a recent survey of

1. "The Harmonious Consent of the Ministers of the Province within the County Palatine of Lancaster, etc." p.16. (Edinburgh 1648).
2. "Hist. of the Puritans" iii : 250 (1822).

the period by one whose judgements we may here set down. "Presbyterianism" says¹ Dr. Jordan, "offered no other solution for the problem of sectarianism than the extirpation of those who differed from the precepts of Geneva. England had risen in rebellion in no small degree because of the manifest indignity and the ruinous consequences flowing from such a philosophy. The nation was shocked and repelled when Puritanism could provide no more reasonable and charitable scheme of religious life. The Presbyterians proposed an essentially medieval ideal which the violence of a century of reformation and an ever-enlarging diversity had destroyed. - - - Presbyterianism offered no more than the exchange of one species of clerical bigotry for another infinitely worse because it enjoyed the support of a larger element of English thought and was implemented by the power of determined arms." The ejections of 1662 transformed their outlook and thereafter what they mostly hoped for was a comprehension of their party in the Church of England. This hope was not fulfilled and thus, by 1689, we find the Presbyterians drawing ever nearer to the Independents, though, as we shall see, they kept a watchful eye on heretics within their own ranks for many years to come.

Congregationalism and Independency have frequently been used as synonymous terms though there is, in fact, a

1. W. K. Jordan, "The Development of Religious Toleration in England" iii : pp. 314-315.

difference of development between the two. Independency might mean at times no more than a protest against the accepted order of religious life whereas Congregationalism implies a definite constructive effort designed to take the place of the English Episcopal system. The attempt was slow in its fulfilment so that even in 1689 many eminent Nonconformists were accurately known as Independents. The constructive principle, however, had been at work much earlier so we may therefore use the title Congregationalist throughout.

The Congregationalists believed that Christ was the head of the Church and that no intermediate person or institution need stand between a Christian and his Lord. A church in any place was formed by the association of christians together and it was believed that such associations, based upon the Scriptures and guided by the Holy Spirit, might safely be entrusted to work out their own salvation. It followed that the local "gathered Church" was competent to manage its affairs and, in particular, to select and ordain, as minister or pastor, whomsoever they desired. It was in short, the application of unlimited private judgement to belief and ecclesiastical policy, and history has shown that the attempt has been remarkably successful.

Like the Presbyterians, who pointed to Scotland and the Netherlands, the Congregationalists could turn their eyes to America where their system had already been established in Massachusetts. A pamphlet written in this

colony by John Cotton,¹ and published in England in 1642, had considerable influence on English Churchmen, including John Owen whom it is reported to have converted to Congregationalism. The real strength of the movement lay, however, in the quality of its supporters. "Of all the by-paths," says Baillie² the Scottish Commissioner, writing in 1645, "wherein the wanderers of our time are pleased to walk, this (Independency) is the most considerable; not for the number, but for the quality of the erring persons therein. There be few of the noted Sects which are not a great deal more numerous; but this Way, what it wants in number, supplies by the weight of its followers, - - - They have been so wise as to engage to their party some of chief note, in both Houses of Parliament, in the Assembly of Divines, in the Army, in the City and Countrey-Committees; all of whom they daily manage with such dexterity and diligence, for the benefit of their Cause, that the eyes of the world begin to fall upon them more than upon all their fellows." Like the Presbyterians, too, with whose fortunes their own were strangely interwoven, they came prominently into national affairs during the Civil War and Commonwealth. The Westminster Assembly, though largely Presbyterian, did comprise at first, as Baillie says, some Congregationalists as well, but in the end, both in and out of the Assembly, insoluble differences arose between the two parties.

1. "The True Constitution of a Particular Visible Church, proved by Scripture etc."
2. R. Baillie - "A Dissuasive from the Errors of the Times" p.53.

Fundamental questions such as the ordination of ministers and the toleration of dissenting sects were found impossible of settlement. Meanwhile, in politics, the influence of the Army superseded that of Parliament and, consequently, after 1649, the Congregationalists, and, to a less extent, the Baptists, entered on a time of favour as precarious and short-lived as that which the Presbyterians had enjoyed a few years before. There was, however, no intemperate seizure of preferments. In 1651 John Owen was appointed Dean of Christchurch and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford and, shortly after, Thomas Goodwin went as President to Magdalen. In the country various livings were presented to Congregationalists while John Howe, William Bridge, Theophilus Gale and others occupied important London pulpits. During the whole period of the Commonwealth many Presbyterians and Anglicans continued in their charges, and it should be remembered that ejectments at the time were frequently on grounds of scandalous behaviour and that in other cases legal provision was made¹ for the dispossessed incumbent and his family. This beneficent intention, as Episcopal historians assert,² may often have been scantily realized in practice but it was at least a better way than that pursued when positions were again to change in 1662.

On 3 September 1658, "a day very memorable for the greatest storm of wind that had ever been known,"³ Oliver

1. By an Ordinance of 11 November, 1647.

2. Walker, "Sufferings of the Clergy" Part I, p.102-105 (1714).

3. Clarendon, "History" vi : 91. (1888).

Cromwell died, and with his death the Congregational supremacy came to an end. In the two tragic years that followed it became more certain every day that they would have to leave the National Church and actually they took little part in subsequent attempts to revive the scheme of Ussher or to effect some other form of Comprehension. The failure of the Presbyterians in this respect was probably welcomed by the Congregationalists since it really strengthened the Nonconformist party. At all events the Congregationalists formed a large part of the ejected ministers in 1662 and their sufferings were similar to those of the Presbyterians. With regard to all Dissenters of the time who suffered imprisonment, fines and premature death during the reigns of Charles II. and James II. there is a scarcity of reliable evidence, for the rigours of the period made record keeping dangerous. There is little doubt, however, that the numbers were very great indeed; but in spite of all the penalties involved Dissenters continued to exist and meet. In the plague year, Baxter¹ tells us, they gave noble service to the helpless poor of London, even while the Five Mile Act was being framed by Parliament at Oxford. Nor was it only in the capital that they survived. Enquiries made by Anglicans in 1669 revealed that even in Canterbury the Independents numbered upwards of five hundred. But these were sifting years for all Dissenters, for the era of the last two Stuart kings is

1. Baxter, "Reliquiae" (1696) Part III, p.2.

surely hard to parallel for reckless folly and cynical corruption in all the policies of state. No promise was too sacred to be broken, no artifice too base to be employed to gratify the bigotry and hate of the triumphant parties in the Church and nation. The House of Commons, for example, which had passed a tolerant measure in 1681, was calmly told that the Secretary of the House had "lost" the measure and it could not, therefore, be presented to the King.¹ Yet all these sorrows may have helped towards an undesired and unexpected outcome, for if by 1689 the Congregationalists had abandoned every hope of national establishment they were supremely anxious to secure for every Christian sect the liberty of conscience and worship so long denied themselves.

The events which shaped the history of Presbyterians and Congregationalists for fifty years before the Toleration Act were equally significant for that of Baptists who afterwards combined with these two bodies to form the "three denominations" of Dissent. Their general history is very similar to that of the Congregationalists especially and we need therefore only notice those particular aspects which contributed in a special way to the religious situation after 1689.

Historians are not yet agreed what influence the Continental Anabaptists exercised on those to whom the name was commonly applied in England. In the early stages

1. Cobbett, "Parl. Hist." iv : 1311.

there were really two distinct groups, the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists. The parent church of the former, composed largely of English refugees, met for many years in Amsterdam under John Smyth and certainly had very close relations with a Dutch sect called Mennonites with whom they even sought a definite alliance in 1611. In the same year a section of the Amsterdam community returned to England under Thomas Helwys, a Lincolnshire man of good family, to form a General Baptist church at Spitalfields in London. The venture had considerable success and other churches of the same persuasion soon appeared. These all embraced a liberal form of doctrine approximating to the Arminian point of view, and though, in time, "Associations" and a "General Assembly" were evolved, their government on the whole was of the congregational type. Meanwhile, the ascendant Puritanism which marked the opening of the Civil War produced the second body who were called Particular Baptists in consequence of their subscription to a rigid Calvinistic view that Christ died for the elect and not for all mankind. Their government was similar to, though quite distinct from that of the General Baptists. There were, however, two things which they held tenaciously in common. The first was a belief that baptism was for believers only, to be received by those who had definitely accepted the Christian faith. The matter is of some importance here for it brings us to the very heart of what is known as private judgement on which the question of religious freedom ultimately hangs. The Baptist doctrine

made the exercise of private judgement fundamental and expressed it in their striking form of baptism which was by immersion in water according to primitive Christian usage. The second thing they held in common was a fervent missionary zeal combined with the belief that all who had a message to deliver should do so freely, where and when they pleased.

Their party lines were not too well defined. Particular individuals might hold all or some of their views and yet remain in touch with other bodies, as Jessey occupied an Independent pulpit and Tombes had Presbyterian associations. On the other hand some competent and cultured men, like Henry Denne, who had been trained at Cambridge and had taken orders in the usual way, forsook the regular clergy and engaged in the typically Baptist work of evangelization. To this, indeed, they gave more care than to the political developments of the time which seemed to promise lasting power to Presbyterians and Congregationalists in turn. Especially did they use the opportunities presented by military service under Cromwell for the spreading of their doctrines. It would seem, as Dr. Whitley¹ says that "the ability of Baptists for warfare was considerable; and many won their way to high rank." In the winter of 1642-43, for example, a political body embracing the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridge, Huntingdon and Lincoln had been formed for mutual protection and advice in the struggle with

1. "Hist. of British Baptists." p.74.

the King. Known as the "Eastern Association" the first activity of its members was the furnishing of money for the Parliamentary interest, but soon the Commons asked them to supply two thousand men who later gave distinguished service under the Earl of Manchester. "My troops increase," said Cromwell¹, "I have a lovely company; you would respect them, did you know them. They are no 'Anabaptists'; they are honest sober Christians;- They expect to be used as men." There was, however, a considerable leaven of Baptist opinion among the new recruits and Cromwell's estimate of their abilities found ample justification in the subsequent services of Chillenden, Freeman, Knowles, Hobson, Lilburne, Deane, Gough and Harrison. Nor did the glammers of a military commission obscure the importance of what each of these men considered his religious one to be. We find that wherever that remarkable army went communities of Baptists soon appeared. Thus at Leith, where Lilburne was stationed in 1652, a considerable church was established. "This year" says² Nicoll in 1653, "Anabaptists daily increast in this nation, quhair nevir nane was of befoir, but now many maid oppin professioun thereof and avowed the same, sae that thrice in the week on Monday, Weddinsday, and Fryday, thair were some dippit at Bonnington Mill, betwixt Leith and Edinburgh, both men and women of good rank. Some day there would be sundry hundred persons attending that action and

1. Quoted by Whitley, *ibid.* p.90. The term "Anabaptist" might still alarm some. (Eastern Association, 11 Sept., 1643.).
2. "Diary" p.106. (Bannatyne Club ed. 1836).

fifteen persons in one day baptised by the Anabaptists." An equal zeal was shown in Wales and Ireland, and everywhere in fact where the career of arms was to lead these Baptist officers and men. But, as with other Dissenters, their activities came sharply to an end in 1660. From the outset at the Restoration Baptists and Quakers were singled out for retribution. The number who had found their way into English parish churches was comparatively small but most of them had been effectually silenced before the Uniformity Act of 1662. In Ireland, Blackwood and Benjamin Cox, two Episcopalians who had become Baptists and continued to occupy posts in Dublin Cathedral, retired in 1660. Several Welsh incumbents and at least four occupants of English livings, Dyke, Gibbs, Jessey and Tombes did the same. The ejections of Bartholomew's Day were therefore not so convulsive in effect for Baptists as for Presbyterians and Congregationalists, though the subsequent afflictions of all three bodies were similar and prolonged. Active soldiers such as Gough departed to New England or went unflinching to the scaffold like Major-General Harrison. Others were fined or imprisoned, the most illustrious example being that of Bunyan who spent twelve years in Bedford gaol. At the same time there were still some Baptists who kept in touch with the King. A Baptist sea-captain, for example, employed as an officer in the Chatham dockyard and noted for his preaching activities appears to have been sufficiently immune to warn the Admiralty in 1668 that he would terminate his services if the operation of the Conventicle Act was to

be prolonged.¹ In a letter sent to Major Nicoll on 1 May, 1668, and duly reported to Samuel Pepys four days later, a certain Edw. Moorcock probably gives expression to the sentiments of more than one Dissenter. "I am resolved" he says², "to meddle no further in the business of the works at Chatham; - - - I am also discouraged to hear of that Act of violence which has passed Parliament about religion; for if, in the middle of our business, we should have been taken in the worshipping of God according to our conscience, our work must have ceased, and so our bonds become forfeited; and nothing less than a prison is like to be the portion of those that come not to the public worship, of which number I am one; so that, until this storm is over, I will not meddle with any employment of great moment." But such cases were rare. The majority of Baptists, mainly farmers, sea-faring men and middle-class tradesmen suffered or remained in peace according to local circumstances, and in 1688 had so far read the signs of the times as to join the coalition of English Protestants, which placed King William on his Throne.

Opinion is unanimous that Baptists from the start have been diligent apostles of religious freedom. Daniel Neal's 'History' asserts³: "The severities of which the Baptists were the marked objects, led them to be advocates for liberty and toleration. - - - These opinions were in those times censured as most damnable doctrines, and the Parliament was invoked,

1. Whitley, op.cit. p.118.

2. Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series. (Nov. 1667 - Sept. 1669) p.376.

3. "Hist. of the Puritans" v : 142-143.

by the pen of Dr. Featly, utterly to exterminate and banish out of the kingdom the Baptists, because they avowed and published them. But the good sense and liberality of more modern times will not only admit these principles as maxims of good policy and sound Christianity, but respect the despised people who brought them forward and stated them, at a period when they were scarcely received by any others, and were held by the generality as most highly obnoxious: when even the great and good Mr. Baxter could declare, "I abhor unlimited liberty, or toleration of all." Toleration was, in fact, a leading principle of the church which came to Spitalfields from Amsterdam in 1611. "To the small community of Arminian Baptists who followed their pastor Helwisse to London," says G. P. Gooch¹ "belongs the glory of the first collective declaration of religious liberty in Great Britain. In their 'Confession of Faith', published in 1611, and in the little volume 'Religious Peace, or a Plea for Liberty of Conscience', published in 1614, the doctrine is clearly stated. Its author, Leonard Busher, - - - reminds King and Parliament that the imposition of a belief by fire and sword is utterly contrary to the merciful law of Christ, who wishes not to destroy but to save the lives of men. Neither King nor bishop can compel belief any more than they can command the wind." Thirty years later these beliefs were strongly emphasised when Roger Williams of Rhode Island came to London in 1644 and published his "Bloudy

1. "Pol. Thought in England from Bacon to Halifax." p.202.

Tenent of Persecution." In this he advocated full liberty of conscience and worship, and denied both the necessity for a State Church and the right of magistrates to dictate in spiritual things. At the Restoration a further series of Baptist pamphlets appeared, reaffirming these essential claims. In 1660 certain Kentish "Anabaptists" confined in Maidstone gaol, addressed "An Humble Petition and representation of the Anabaptists" to the King, and in 1661 John Sturghion published "A Plea for Toleration of Opinions and Persuasions in Matters of Religion, differing from the Church of England." In the same year seven Baptist ministers published "Sion's Groans for her Distressed, or Sober Endeavours to Prevent Innocent Blood."¹ These and other tracts, of greater or less merit, suggest that religious liberty was fundamental for the Baptists. Nor was it merely the desire of a persecuted minority for recognition. It is true, as Daniel Neal remarks, that English Baptists never had the chance to show their attitude in other circumstances, but it is a notable fact that in Rhode Island, where they wielded full administrative power, they established and maintained complete liberty of conscience, unlike Massachusetts and other colonies where persecution was not unknown. In any case we may be sure that Toleration was a main tradition of the Baptists who entered into partial rest in 1689.

1. These have been collected in "Tracts on Liberty of Conscience." pp. 349-382.

The benefits of the Toleration Act were also shared by the Society of Friends. The derisive name of Quakers was applied to members of this Society by Gervase Bennett when some of them appeared before the magistrate in 1647 and by this title they continued to be known. They had much in common with the followers of Jacob Boehme, with Seekers and Muggletonians, and perhaps especially with the General Baptists from whom many of their early leaders came. Unlike the larger Nonconformist bodies which came to prominence in Cromwell's time and were to some extent the outcome of unusual circumstances in the religious life of the age, the Quakers had their origin in the spiritual genius of a single man. That man was George Fox, and though his followers often changed and even distorted his original message, yet his influence so continued to pervade the movement that some notice of his character and teaching will sufficiently reveal the Quaker point of view when Toleration came.

He was, it seems, the subject of abnormal physical experiences. Doubtless many of the stories that have gathered round his name may be discounted but the strange events recorded in his "Journal" are not so easily disposed of. On one occasion, for example, he sought help from a clergyman called Macham and thus reports the incident. "He would needs give me some physic, and I was to have been let blood; but they could not get one drop of blood from me, either in arms or head (though they endeavoured it), my body being, as it were, dried up with sorrows, grief and troubles."¹

1. "Journal" p.5. (1924).

On such phenomena there is perhaps no final judgement to be made; they must be left alone; but that he was a man endowed beyond the normal with psychical and religious insight there is no doubt at all. His first religious contacts are not easy to discern, though some of his relatives, including a London uncle called Pickering, were certainly attached to Baptist groups whom Fox in later days describes as "tender." But no religious body could afford him peace and in 1643, when nineteen years of age, he started on that lonely quest which led him, four years later, to the doctrine of the Inner Light. "When all my hopes in them and in all men were gone," he writes¹ in reference to his early quests among contemporary 'professors', "so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do; then, Oh ! then I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition:' and when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy - - - My desires after the Lord grew stronger, and zeal in the pure knowledge of God, and of Christ alone, without the help of any man, book, or writing. For though I read the Scriptures that spake of Christ and of God, yet I knew Him not, but by revelation, as He who hath the key did open, and as the Father of Life drew me to His Son by His Spirit. Then the Lord gently led me along, and let me see His love, which was endless and eternal, surpassing all the knowledge that men have in the natural state, or can get by history or books."

1. "Journal" p.8.

This was in fact a sharp reaction from the somewhat formal Calvinistic teaching of the time to a rich and fertile doctrine of the immanence of God. It carried with it implications which he was not slow to recognise. "I was glad," he says,¹ "that I was commanded to turn people to that inward light, spirit, and grace, by which all might know their salvation, and their way to God; even that Divine Spirit which would lead them into all Truth, and which I infallibly know would never deceive any." This calling of men to God was necessarily a calling them from "men's inventions and windy doctrines, by which they blowed the people about this way and the other way, from sect to sect" and from "their images and crosses, and sprinkling of infants, with all their holy days (so-called)."² Moreover, this new light implied a new and personal dignity for those in whom it shone. "As I travelled up and down," he goes on, "I was not to bid people 'Good morrow,' or 'Good evening', neither might I bow or scrape with my leg to anyone, and this made the sects and professions to rage."

The pioneer of mystical revival has more than once been lost to real life in abstract speculation, but it was not so with Fox. A feature of his movement from its first beginning was a keen and vocal horror of immorality and injustice in all their forms. "About this time" proceeds the Journal³, "I was sorely exercised in going to their Courts to cry for justice, and in speaking and writing to

1. Ibid. p.21

2. Ibid. p.22

3. Ibid. p.22

judges and justices to do justly; and in warning such as kept public-houses for entertainment that they should not let people have more drink than would do them good; and in testifying against their wakes or feasts, their may-games, sports, plays, and shows which trained up people to vanity and looseness, and led them from the fear of God." There was one thing in particular against which Quakers were to testify for many years. This was the levying of tithes in an England where many devoted Christians were no longer members of the National Church. Here, too, they might refer to Fox and the early Friends who believed that ministers should be supported by voluntary contributions from the people. On 6 June, 1652, at an open-air meeting in Westmorland, Fox, speaking from the rock that still retains his name, asserted that "the fellside - - was as holy as any other ground - - - that Christ Himself was now come who had ended both the Temple and its worship, and the priests and their tithes."¹ Again, in 1653, he writes "If any minister of Jesus Christ - - comes to our houses and minister unto us spiritual things, we will set before him our carnal things."² The Quakers were unanimous in condemnation of any system to maintain the ministry that was based on law and compulsion.

Fox had been apprenticed to the shoe-making trade, and this supplies an index to the class from which many of his converts were to come, though others, such as William Penn,

1. Braithwaite - "Beginnings of Quakerism" p.84 .

2. Epistle No.29.

whose friendship with the Stuarts was at times a doubtful blessing, later joined the movement. His first disciples were redeemed from a company of "shattered"¹ Baptists who had so far lost their light as to play shovel-board on Sundays. Numerous additions were recruited from the Seekers and from other similar sects; many doubtless were reclaimed from the world that lay in the Wicked One. In organizing them no pattern of church government was formed, for the personal genius of Fox remained for many years the real bond of union. Like the Baptists they were more or less immune from such catastrophes as that of 1662 but they did not escape the prolonged persecutions of the subsequent years. As with other Nonconformists, however, the imprisonments and martyrdoms were powerless to repress the strength of inward faith and had but served, in 1689, to confirm their passionate devotion to personal and social righteousness.

It was to men and women who had suffered much for these various traditions of Dissent that partial relief was granted by the Toleration Act. They carried these traditions with them into very different times, and we have now to see what influence they had and how they prospered there.

II. Protestant Dissenters, 1689 - 1727.

The Protestant Dissenters have continued to regard the

1. Fox's "Journal". p.15.

coming of King William as something in the nature of an act of God. For all of them, to use¹ the words of Ivimey, the Baptist, "The happy Revolution of 1688 was a glorious era in the annals of the English nation. Without the shedding of blood, through the steady and persevering zeal of protestant patriots in opposing popery and tyranny the nation found itself in possession of religious and civil liberty, procured for them by their illustrious deliverer, and guaranteed by a wise and equitable constitution.")

Although immediate Nonconformist gains were negative and scanty, and though reasonable hopes of subsequent enlargements were consistently deferred, this judgement, on the whole, is probably the right one. The Toleration Act, whatever its defects, gave Nonconformist worshippers relief from bitter persecution and opened up the way for ampler and more honourable measures. A breathing space, one might have thought, had been afforded wherein Dissenters might review traditions and beliefs and re-adjust themselves to new conditions which political events had brought about. But when we survey the fortunes of Dissent in the succeeding years we meet at once with one of those surprising situations which ever and again defeat the most assured predictions of the doctrinaire historian. The Act was safely on the statute book; the "Letters" of John Locke were giving classic exposition of the doctrine it embodied; Dissenting worship and profession might be found in every

1. Ivimey "History of the English Baptists" iii : 17.

English town; and yet, in such propitious circumstances, the utmost they secured in forty years was an annual Indemnity Act which gave humiliating pardon for infringements of the penal laws incurred, in many cases through legitimate attempts to serve the public interests of the time. The real question that confronts us here is why Dissenters failed so long to realize their ultimate ideal of religious freedom and equality; and the answer to this question will provide the key to many unexpected developments in eighteenth century religion.

We must seek the causes that delayed the progress of Dissent in two directions. In the first place, it encountered once again a spell of bitter opposition from without and, in the next place its inward state and temper had suffered a considerable change.

As to the first of these, it soon became apparent that the persecuting motives which had been so active under Stuart kings were still alive and merely waiting favourable times to operate again. Such motives are notoriously hard to analyse. No doubt some measure of sincere religious faith inspired the hatred of High Churchmen for the many sects which now appeared in England; but it is fairly clear that other interests, born of class and politics, were now, as always, closely joined with faith in its resort to persecution. Occasionally, too, the lawful but imprudent acts of individual Dissenters would arouse resentment in conforming neighbours, as when Sir Humphrey Edwyne made his celebrated progress as Lord Mayor in 1697

to the church at Pinner's Hall of which he was a member. But the matter went beyond such isolated acts. There lingered on in Church and State a deep and wide dislike of every kind of Nonconformity which seemed to many minds to be a particularly dangerous aspect of a dangerous Revolution. In the early years of William's reign this hatred was discredited and silent but as the century came to an end the Churchmen and the Tory class began more active opposition. At William's death the situation greatly changed and a feature of his successor's reign was a sharp revival of intolerance and persecution which was not finally allayed until George I. was safely on the throne.

The anomalous position occupied by the Nonconformists even after the passing of the Toleration Act laid them open to several forms of persecution. Two things in particular were seized on by the Churchmen and their friends and, in the end, became the objects of restrictive legislation. The first of these was the establishment of Dissenting "academies" or schools. Exclusion from the Universities had led various Dissenting ministers to open private seminaries wherein candidates for the ministry might be trained. One of the oldest of these useful institutions, that of Sheriffhales, could trace its origins to the year that followed the passing of the Uniformity Act, while the Congregationalist seminary at Carmarthen was opened in 1668. The famous Rathmell academy of Richard Frankland, which began its work in 1669, exhibits in a

striking way the precarious nature of Dissenting education under the Five Mile Act. With his students Frankland left Rathmell for Natland in 1674. In 1683 he removed to Manor Hall, Kirby Malham, and in the same year was obliged to go to Dawson Fold, Crossthwaite. In 1684 the seminary removed to Hartbarrow and thence, in November 1686, to Attercliffe, near Sheffield, returning finally, in August 1689, to Rathmell. After 1688 the seminaries already in existence tended to enlarge the scope of their activities while others such as Bristol (1690), Exeter (1690), Manchester (1699) and Hoxton (1701), were established in different parts of the country. Humble though their origins may frequently have been these seminaries possessed a singular tenacity and an intellectual vigour which was destined to make a lasting contribution to English education and to produce results comparable at least with those of the older Universities.

At first the emphasis in the academies was mainly theological but as time went on a wider and more liberal culture was attempted. As at Rathmell, for example, where Oliver Heywood was impressed by "their proficiency as to human learning"¹ the classics, philosophy and mathematics began to take a place in the curriculum. So liberal, indeed, was the instruction given at Taunton in 1695 that "the United Brethren of Devon and Cornwall, considered the use which some Anabaptists, educated by Warren, made of

1. H. McLachlan, "English Education under the Test Acts." p. 64.

their learning, and it was resolved 'that private tutors among us be cautioned against educating for the ministry those who professedly oppose the Heads of Agreement assented to by the United Brethren' - a reference to the Heads of Agreement made by Presbyterians and Independents in London in 1691."¹ Since, in the nature of the case, High Churchmen looked on the academies as "heretical" the abundant evidence of these liberal tendencies added considerable weight to their complaints. It was commonly alleged as well that the seminaries were centres of subversive political thought. If this charge was true of the earlier foundations we may, perhaps, reflect that such an attitude was hardly matter for surprise. Moreover, such a charge might with equal justice have been levelled at the University of Oxford whose "heats and passions" in the Tory interest frequently appear in the debates of the time. At all events, as we have seen, Archbishop Sharp of York attempted in 1692, to restrain the activities of Frankland, though the two men seem ultimately to have reached terms of understanding and even friendship. Similarly Joshua Oldfield and others in different parts of the country were frequently subjected to provoking interruptions of their work. After 1697, says Calamy² "some discovered an inclination to give disturbance to the Dissenters at home, particularly about their engaging in the instructing of youth;" and in a footnote we are told the reference is to the case of "Mr. Joshua

1. Ibid. p.71.

2. "Life and Times." 1 : 402. ed. Rutt, London 1829

Oldfield, pastor of a congregation of Dissenters in Coventry. Upon a suspicion of his instructing youth, he was cited to appear in the Ecclesiastical Court at Coventry, October 14, 1697. The defendant obtained a stay of the proceedings, and brought up the matter to the King's Bench, where it was depending three or four terms, to his great trouble and charge. A prohibition was at length obtained, and - - - the Ecclesiastical Court thought fit to let the cause fall; not without intimation from his Majesty that he was not pleased with such prosecutions." When Anne began to reign this unpleasant form of persecution was renewed with great intensity. In 1703, for example, Samuel Wesley,¹ whose own father had been ejected in 1662, attacked the seminaries openly; but his attack was mild indeed compared with the abuse which followed from the lips and pen of the notorious Sacheverell. The seminaries, he declared,² were places "wherein Atheism, Deism, Tritheism, Socinianism, with all the Hellish Principles of Fanaticism, Regicide, and Anarchy are openly Profess'd, and Taught, to Corrupt and Debauch the Youth of the Nation." The issue soon became involved with that of "Occasional Conformity" and the seminaries re-appear continually in the debates which raged around that question. Finally, in May 1714, the Schism Bill enjoined that no person might conduct a private school unless he signed a declaration of conformity to the liturgy of the Church of England and obtained a

1. "A Letter from a Country Divine - - concerning Private Academies."

2. "Perils of False Brethren." p.15. (preached in St. Paul's 5 Nov. 1709).

teaching licence from the Bishop of the diocese where he proposed to carry on his work. It is always futile to suppose what might have been; but it is fairly certain that this jealous measure, had it operated for any length of time, would have had disastrous consequences for English Nonconformity. But the provisions of the Schism Act were destined never to have practical effect. On the very day appointed for its operation a gracious Providence intervened to call the Queen away and with her death the Act fell into desuetude.

But it was another matter that evoked the most embittered efforts of the Churchmen in their new attack on the Dissenters. This was the practice of "occasional conformity" by many Nonconformists. The Test and Corporation Acts permitted no person who had not first received the Sacrament according to the Church of England rite to hold any office under the Crown or to occupy the post of alderman or mayor in local borough councils. For many years these limiting provisions had been successfully evaded by the candidate's communicating once or twice before election in an Established Church and thereafter continuing his more or less open attachment to the sect of which he was a member. The arrangement was acceptable to moderate Episcopalians like Tenison and Burnet. "I myself" declared¹ the latter in one of the debates upon the subject, "had communicated with the churches of Geneva and Holland; and

1. "Own Times" v : 107.

yet at the same time communicated with the church of England: so, though the dissenters were in a mistake, as to their opinion which was the more perfect church, yet allowing them a toleration in that error, this practice might be justified." Many Presbyterians and some Congregationalists took full advantage of the arrangement. Writing at the time, John Howe informs¹ us that the practice had been common over thirty years. "In (16)62" he says, "the Same Spirit, and Sentiment, afresh, appear'd; when most of the considerable, ejected London ministers met; and agreed to hold Occasional Communion with the (now) re-established Church; not quitting their own Ministry, or declining the Exercise of it, as they could have opportunity. And as far as I could by enquiry learn; I can little doubt this to have been the Judgement of their Fellow-sufferers, through the Nation, in great part, ever since." There were, however, many Nonconformists who had serious doubts about the matter. The Baptists, for example, almost unanimously condemned it and at an Assembly held in London on 3 September, 1689, recommended that members of Baptist Churches practising occasional conformity should be admonished and, if necessary, rejected.² For various reasons, some similar and others very different, the Baptist view was shared by the High Church party in the Church of England. Honest men of all persuasions were instinctively

1. "Some Consideration of a Preface to an Enquiry concerning the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters" (1701) p.33.

2. "Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly - - - of the Baptized Churches etc." (1689).

repelled by such evasion as occasional conformity implied; but the sincere High Churchman's attitude to this particular question was influenced by other factors too. He probably approved that quasi-spiritual view of life which had found a somewhat negative expression in the Test and Corporation Acts, and if these could be justified at all in English practice it was clear that sheer consistency and respect for law demanded measures to prevent their being virtually set aside. Then there were less worthy motives at work. One such was surely the political interest which will meet us at a later stage. Here it is enough to say that from 1697 when Sir Humphrey Edwyne made his celebrated London progress, the High Churchmen and the Tories found common ground in "occasional conformity" for an attack on the Dissenters which did not ease until an Act for its prevention had been successfully carried into law.

As in the case of the academies the real onslaught came when Anne began to reign. A Bill for preventing Occasional Conformity by the threat of heavy fines was brought before the Commons and read a first time on 14 November, 1702. Within a fortnight the third reading had been completed and the measure went up to the Lords. But here the atmosphere was different, for many members of the Upper House who owed their dignities to William's favour had little liking for its not entirely disingenuous proposals. They allowed, indeed, the reading of the Bill but amended its clauses in a way calculated to provoke the House of Commons. The plan worked admirably and resulted

in a conference of the two Houses on 16 January, 1703 when the obstacles to progress were so manifest and great that the measure had to be abandoned for a time.

The proceedings were enlivened and embittered by the well-meant intervention of Defoe. Himself a Dissenter opposed to Occasional Conformity, he published an emphatic pamphlet from this point of view. "The dissenters" he asserted,¹ "are strangely mistaken in their apprehensions of the ill consequences of this act. To such I would say, I cannot imagine what they have to fear from it, or why they should be uneasy with the honour; they are also rid of the encumbrance of being mayors, alder-men, jurats and sheriffs of the towns and corporations; and let them but reflect what was the gain that all the dissenters in England have made by places and pensions from the government since the late revolution, I am persuaded it will not amount to the sum that one churchman will be found to have cheated the nation of. The church are willing to engross all the knaves to themselves, and let them do it and welcome, though they get all the money into the bargain. - - - The safety of dissenters consists in their own honesty and integrity." The virulence of the High Church attack, however, led Defoe to leave the calm and reasoned style appropriate to such commendable opinions and to essay a further venture in the dangerous field of irony. In an anonymous paper which affected to express the High Church

1. "An Enquiry into Occasional Conformity".
Trevelyan: "Select Documents for Queen Anne's
Reign" p.50.

view he indulged his gift for satire to the full. In "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters" he declared,¹ "It is cruelty to kill a snake or a toad in cold blood, but the poison of their nature makes it a charity to our neighbours to destroy those creatures, not for any personal injury received, but for prevention; not for the evil they have done, but the evil they may do. Serpents, Toads, vipers, etc. are noxious to the body, and poison the sensitive life; these poison the soul, corrupt our posterity, ensnare our children, destroy the vitals of our happiness, our future felicity, and contaminate the whole mass. Shall any law be given to such wild creatures? Some beasts are for sport, and the huntsmen give them advantages of ground; but some are knocked on the head by all possible ways of violence and surprise. I do not prescribe fire and faggot, but as Scipio said of Carthage, *Delenda est Carthago*, they are to be rooted out of this nation, if ever we will live in peace, serve God, or enjoy our own." The fury of the High Churchmen knew no bounds, when, after hailing and applauding the pamphlet, they realized that they had been fooled. However much the author might protest,² "If any man takes the pains seriously to reflect upon the contents, nature of the thing, and the manner of the style, it seems impossible to imagine it should pass for anything but a banter upon the high-flying churchmen," - these same High Churchmen

1. Trevelyan "Select Documents" p.55.

2. "Explanation of the Shortest Way with the Dissenters" Trevelyan, *ibid.* p.55.

determined on revenge. Defoe was ordered to stand three times in the pillory and later to await the pleasure of the Queen in Newgate gaol, though it is but fair to say that the crowd which often pelted occupants of the pillory with unmentionable refuse gave him an ovation there and surrounded him with flowers.

In the next few years, though several abortive attempts were made to carry the Occasional Conformity Bill, opposition to the proposal seems to have increased. By 1710, however, the Tory ascendancy together with "the turbulent preaching and practices of an impudent man, one Dr. Sacheverell"¹ made the situation of Dissenters less secure. It was in these circumstances that the restless Earl of Nottingham completed a very doubtful bargain with the Whigs on the question of peace with France. He agreed to help the Whigs in their opposition to the proposed Tory peace if they would let the oft-rejected bill against Occasional Conformity be carried into law. So, once again, on 15 December, 1711, the bill was introduced and quickly carried through all its stages. It provided that "all persons in places of profit and trust, and all the common-council men in corporations who should be at any meeting for divine worship (where there were above ten persons more than the family) in which the Common Prayer was not used, or where the Queen and the Princess Sophia were not prayed for, should upon conviction forfeit their

1. Letter from Bp. of Worcester to Archbp. of Dublin,
30 June, 1710
"Second Report of Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts" p.245 (1871).

place of trust or profit - the witnesses making oath within ten days, and the prosecution being within three months after the offence; and such persons were to continue incapable of any employment till they should depose, that for a whole year together they had been at no conventicle."¹ For many Nonconformists this implied complete exclusion from the service of the State and for others a most humiliating and anomalous position. We may conclude with Calamy's² description of the situation which is as follows: "When the Bill passed (at which some greatly rejoiced, and others heartily mourned,) it became a question with some worthy persons, such as Sir Thomas Abney, and Sir John Fryer, aldermen of London, the Mayors of several Corporations, and some Justices of the Peace, in several counties in England, whether they should quit their places, and throw up their commissions in order to the holding public communion with the Protestant Dissenters, in their worshipping assemblies, as they had done hitherto, or continue in their offices, confining themselves to that private family worship which the law still allowed. Upon mature consideration, backed with the pressing importunity of several persons of distinction in our own nation, joined with the solicitation of the Resident of Brunswick, who took pains to represent to them in the strongest manner, how far the interest of his master and of the Hanover family depended upon their continuance in the posts and

1. Quoted by Stoughton "Ch. of the Revolution". p.368.
 2. "Life and Times" ii : 245.

stations they were in, (not without strong assurances at the same time of earnest endeavours for relief as to this and other hardships, whenever the Protestant succession should come to take place,) they were prevailed with to keep in their places, and content themselves for a time with that restrained way of worship the law allowed."

While academies and occasional conformists were receiving such unwelcome attentions in the high places of the land the spirit that inspired the Churchmen did not fail to influence the "Mobile Vulgus" as well. The "mob," no doubt, is ever ready to applaud or plunder as occasion serves without too nice appreciation of underlying causes. Defoe, for example, though a prominent Dissenter, was cheered with acclamation in the London pillory; but it is possible that in their hearts the illiterate multitude were none too fond of Nonconformist neighbours whose austerity of life was in obvious contrast to the laxity of the time. Sometimes a rough good-humour marked the demonstrations of the crowd. At a Cirencester cockfight, for instance, in the heated days of the ^{what?} impeachment, Cock Burgess and Cock Sacheverell were set upon each other in the pit. The Dissenting bird, it seems, was easily the victor.¹ In larger towns, however, where there was practically no police control at all, good-humoured horseplay frequently developed into destructive rioting. Of this the Nonconformists had experience on more than one occasion.

1. Stoughton : "Ch. of the Revolution" p.366.

When William died, we are told, "In several Parts of the Country, They talk'd of pulling down the Meeting Houses, as Places not fit to be suffer'd. And in one Town, (Newcastle-under-Line,) they actually went to Work, as soon as ever the Tidings of the King's Death reach'd them".¹ In the reign of Anne, for various reasons, popular enthusiasm was secured by the prophets of intolerance against the Whigs and the Dissenters. As Anne proceeded in her sedan chair to the great impeachment trial of 1710, the crowd surged round her shouting "We hope Your Majesty is for a High Church and Sacheverell" - and it were well had her perfervid subjects been content with vocal demonstration. Trevelyan² thus describes the sequel: "Ministers had neglected the warnings sent them by the Reverend Daniel Burgess, whose spirited and often amusing sermons were the delight of a large and wealthy Presbyterian congregation. On the night of March the First his well-appointed Chapel was torn down by the mob, who made a glorious bonfire, in the neighbouring Lincoln's Inn Fields of pulpit, pews, cushions and of the famous japanned clock:

The faithful clock which oft before
Had pointed to the pudding hour.

Half a dozen other meeting-houses went up in flame. The mansions of the Whig Lords and Bishops were threatened by the insurgence of ever new mobs, who took complete possession of the town. At length the cry was raised to

1. Edmund Calamy "An Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's History of his Life and Times" (1713) vol. 1 : 620.
2. Trevelyan "Peace and the Protestant Succession" p.56.

storm the Bank of England, the greatest Whig citadel of all, full to the roof, as the mob believed, of golden guineas." In the end, the rioters were only scattered by the arrival of Foot and Horse Guards from St. James Palace. Similar outbursts followed the alarms and suspicions of the 1715 rising, though Dissenters were assuredly the steadiest supporters of the new King and his government. If we add to all these the numerous unrecorded ways in which Dissenters could be baited and tormented from without, it is hardly matter for surprise that they were frequently content to live in such tranquillity as might be found in the existing situation.

As to the inward state of Nonconformity we must agree with friends and foes alike that very great changes followed 1689. Professor Saintsbury has spoken of the curious need of change which, frequently without apparent cause, betrays itself continually in the affairs of men. Such a change was now at work in nearly every phase of English intellectual life. A feature of the movement was the application of "reason" or "common sense" to all activities of the mind. For science and philosophy the movement was a fruitful one: to literature it gave the polished, if sometimes artificial, balance of the Neo-classic school. But widespread movements such as this may work for either good or ill in existing institutions according as these institutions are ready to receive them. Thus while we may well believe that all the churches were affected by the change, it is possible that thirty years of bitter

persecution had scarcely fitted Nonconformity to profit as it might have done by this return to "reason". For one thing, it was much disorganized; and, for another, many of its old leaders, men like Baxter, Bunyan and Fox who had learned the true ecclesiastical situation in the bitter school of experience, were rapidly passing away. The new leaders were, inevitably, different men. Some of them had read at Dutch or Scottish Universities; but however liberal Leyden and Utrecht may have been, they did not quite repair the serious loss entailed by exclusion from the English Universities. Others had been trained at the Dissenting academies, but these seminaries had not as yet attained the mature development of older seats of learning. A few recruits appear to have arrived from Scotland but opinions of their worth were sometimes not too high. "it is a foolish Humour" it was said in 1731,¹ "in some of our Societies, to be engaged by the Noise and Wheedle of these People - - The Power of their Kirk-Sessions, Presbyteries, etc., runs too much in their Heads; and the general Fire of their Tempers is too great, to fit them to deal with English Constitutions, and to act upon Dissenting Principles." In any case we may conclude that various domestic causes helped to make English Nonconformity particularly subject to the changing spirit of the time.

In itself the change might easily have been met and sustained without undue concern had its effects been for the

1. "Some Observations upon the Present State of the Dissenting Interest." Anon. (1731) p.32.

better; but contemporary opinion is almost unanimous that the period which followed the accession of William was one of spiritual decline. George Fox, the Quaker, died in 1691 and in his closing days his mind was much perturbed by what he saw around him. "I had" he wrote¹, "a concern upon my spirit with respect to a twofold danger that attended some who professed truth: one was of young people's running into the fashions of the world; and the other was of old people's going into earthly things." At the turn of the century another Quaker, Ambrose Riggs of Ryegate affirmed² that "many days and months, yea, some years, hath my life been oppressed, and my spirit grieved, to see and hear of the uneven walking of many who have a name to live and profess the knowledge of God in words. - - The name of the Lord has been, and is likely to be, greatly dishonoured, if things of this nature be not stopped." A letter by twelve pastors of the Western Baptist Association gives expression to a similar state of things. "Alas!" they write, "whilst we are endeavouring to rejoice in the goodness of God, and the prosperity of some (churches), our spirits are almost overwhelmed by sorrow, in considering the heart-breaking estate and dismal circumstances of others. The several cases laid before us, do too plainly discover, what sad work the devil, the world, and unsanctified corruptions do make, amongst some that fear the Lord in truth. - - - God has given us liberty of conscience; - is this a suitable return

1. "Journal" ii : 493. (1901).

2. Gough. "Hist. of the Quakers" iv : 9.

to our God, to defile our own, and offend the consciences of others? We have peace without; - is it a right improvement of it, to fall upon and devour each other within? what can we expect but either to be devoured of each other, or, if mercy prevent not, by restraining our fury, to have our gracious and tender Father taking the rod into his hand to part and chastise his contending children." The same state of things prevailed among the Presbyterians and Congregationalists, and by the reign of Anne a common theme of preacher and pamphleteer was "the decay of the Dissenting interest." Even so, we might, with ample reason, hesitate to form a final judgement if the evidence depended on the writings of the less responsible members of Dissent. In 1730, for example, there appeared "An Enquiry into the Causes of the Decay of the Dissenting Interest" from the pen of a young man called Strickland Gough. Among other things he tells us of the large number of Nonconformist ministers who had joined the Established Church since George I began to reign. He, also, in the end, found refuge in the Church of England, and his pamphlet might have passed, with many more, into the limbo of irrelevant things but for the fact that Philip Doddridge, Abraham Taylor, and Isaac Watts were moved to refute or explain the statements he had made. At a meeting held on 6 January, 1731, for "spending some time in prayer, on account of the great declensions in religion visible at the present day", Abraham Taylor¹ declared that

1. In a Sermon preached in 1732 on "Spiritual Declensions etc." iii : 26.

in contemporary preaching "Christ was much left out, and some seem to take pleasure, in being able to spin out an empty harangue, the length of an hour, without mentioning His name." And though some attributed levity and general inaptitude to the many who had left Dissenting churches, and denied that the decline was deep or widespread, Isaac Watts¹ admitted a "decay of vital religion in the hearts of men and the little success which the ministrations of the Gospel have had of late in the conversion of sinners."

But whether we regard the Nonconformist life of the time as decadent or as merely passing through an awkward transition, one thing may be confidently said: the enlargement of religious liberty called for unity of action, and the tendency in doctrine and in practice was lamentably divisive. In 1690 when Presbyterian and Congregational leaders were exploring the possibilities of union between the two Churches, a joint ordination at Rathmel, Yorkshire, in which Oliver Heywood had a part, ended so disastrously that the Independent brethren sat down and refused to participate further in the service, while the "Happy Union" itself, effected between the two denominations the following year under the "Heads of Agreement," endured only for three precarious years when the Calvinistic controversy occasioned by the posthumous appearance of Tobias Crisp's Sermons, and in which the Presbyterian Daniel Williams became deeply involved, made further joint action a practical impossibility.

1. Dale "History of English Congregationalism" p.556.

It was, in fact, a time of acute sectarian consciousness and of speculation on what are probably the insoluble problems of theology. A glance at Dr. Whitley's excellent "Baptist Bibliography" reveals that the body which some fifty years before had produced the very classics of religious liberty was now chiefly concerned with modes of baptism, interpretations of recondite prophecy, speculations on the Trinity, or the deaths of local saints; and frequently the sole result was bitter controversy and even the splitting of individual churches.¹ Speculative controversy reached its height in 1719 when the famous Salters' Hall dispute began. In Exeter, two years before, the Arian tendencies of certain Presbyterian ministers had greatly exercised the "managers" of their churches and the matter grew to a serious dispute. The Anglican clergy in the town accused the Presbyterians of having "first denied their Church and now their Saviour" and of having made the Press sweat with their blasphemies.² The dispute quickly spread to London and a meeting of the ministers of the "three denominations" met at Salters' Hall on 19 February, 1719, to enquire into the circumstances and offer sound advice to the contending friends at Exeter. The result of this meeting, and of a subsequent one on 24 February, was alarming. A motion that the advice to be sent to Exeter should be accompanied by a declaration of the

1. Cf. Thomas Harrison "Funeral Sermon - - for Dame Mary Page, preached March 16, 1728," followed shortly by the same author's "Answer to a false and scandalous paper entitled 'The reasons which induced some ministers to blame Mr. Harrison's conduct towards Mr. Richardson in the affair of Lady Mary Page's funeral sermon'."
2. Peirce. "Western Inquisition" p.40.

Assembly's belief in the Trinity was rejected by 57 votes to 53; and thus another breach was opened in Dissent. The non-subscribers, as the majority were called, contained some of the ablest men of the three Churches. The Presbyterians and the General Baptists, in particular, were affected and ultimately many of them found their way into Unitarianism, though some appear to have renounced their "heresy" so completely as to accept the Thirty-Nine Articles and join the Church of England. The effect on Nonconformity, for a time at least, was serious and robbed it of that effective unity which, on several occasions before 1727, might have pressed for larger toleration with some hope of success.

So far we have been dealing with the alleged "decay" of Nonconformity which hindered the attainment of religious liberty; but there is more than this to say. If Dissenters were so numerous and influential at the end of George I's reign that special legislation was required to meet their claims it is obvious that other factors than those of decay must all the while have been retained within their ranks. The suggestion, therefore, may be made that they conserved throughout these changing and conflicting years some elements of permanence and value which, soon or late, must find a place of freedom in any Christian state; and in turning to examine them we are, in fact, returning to the fundamental "traditions of Dissent" which survived the subtle test of altered circumstances brought about in 1689.

As to actual Nonconformist statistics the extant evidence is exceedingly precarious. The reign of William III was marked by the appearance of new meeting-houses all over the country but this was merely the outward and visible sign of the existence of churches which in earlier times had been afraid to venture into public view. So dangerous had been those earlier years that "The dissenters continued to take the most prudent measures to cover their private meetings from their adversaries. They assembled in small numbers - they frequently shifted their places of worship, and met together late in the evenings, or early in the mornings - there were friends without doors, always on the watch to give notice of approaching danger - when the dwellings of dissenters joined, they made windows or holes in the walls, that the preacher's voice might be heard in two or three houses - they had sometimes private passages from one house to another, and trap doors for the escape of the minister, who went always in disguise, except when he was discharging his office - in country-towns and villages, they were admitted through backyards and gardens into the house, to avoid the observation of neighbours and passengers - for the same reason they never sang psalms - and the minister was placed in such an inward part of the house, that his voice might not be heard in the streets - the doors were locked, and a sentinel placed near them to give the alarm, that the preacher might escape by some private passage, with as many of the congregation as could avoid the informers."¹

1. Neal "History of the Puritans" v : 11-12.

In 1702 Defoe declared¹ the total number of Dissenters to be something near two millions but the "glee" which Professor Basil Williams² has detected in this robust Dissenter's comparison of crowded meeting-houses with empty Parish Churches, may also have affected his conclusions as to numbers. In 1715 Daniel Neal estimated the number of Dissenting meeting-houses in England as 1,107. Of these 247 were Baptist and the rest Presbyterian or Congregationalist. Members, however, do not seem to have increased in direct proportion to the general population. A visitor "who came from Northampton to reside in London"³ tells us that he found 58 Presbyterian and Independent churches in the capital in 1731, an increase of only one since 1695. Nevertheless, the national aggregates of churches and members must have been considerable at the death of George I, and no government could well afford to ignore or alienate altogether such a body of the people. In ordered societies, however, the establishment of great social principles must ultimately rest on something more profound than numbers; and it was due in no small degree to their possession of enduring spiritual qualities that further freedom came to the Dissenters. A brief analysis of these may be attempted here.

1. Wilson "Life of Defoe" ii : 48.
2. In the MS. of his forthcoming book, kindly lent. (ch. "Religion and the Churches").
3. "A View of the Dissenting Interest in London - from 1695 to 25 December 1731". This is the Palmer MS. in Dr. William's Library.

SPECIAL NOTE ON NONCONFORMIST STATISTICS: The difficulty of securing accurate figures is admitted by Professor G.N.Clark ("The Later Stuarts" p.26) and by Dr. E.D. Bebb ("Nonconformity and Social and Economic Life" pp.35-40) who seem to have arrived at different results. The matter is most fully treated by Dr. Bebb from whose work the appended tables have been taken.

I MEETING HOUSES REGISTERED UNDER THE TOLERATION ACT.

Period	England		Wales		Quakers. England & Wales	
	Tem- porary.	Per- manent.	Tem- porary.	Per- manent.	Tem- porary.	Per- manent.
1688-1690	796	143	--	--	131	108
1691-1700	1247	32	--	--	80	6
1701-1710	1216	41	3	--	98	3
1711-1720	862	21	13	--	46	1
1721-1730	439	27	9	--	30	3.

These figures also illustrate to some extent the "decline of the Dissenting interest".

II DISSENTING CONGREGATIONS IN ENGLAND IN 1715 AS ESTIMATED BY EVANS (E) AND NEAL (N).

Congregations.		Hearers.	Baptists. Only.	
E	N		E	N
1104	1089	210931	244	246

III DISSENTERS HAVING VOTES IN 1715. This is from the Evans MS.. It is incomplete and takes no count of plural votes.

County	10436
Borough	3587
Unspecified	5452

Total 19475 Quakers 533.

In the first place, Dissenters made a very definite contribution to the religious life of the community. The secular historian has not infrequently dismissed this fact with scarce disguised contempt but no unbiassed view of this or any other age can fail to take account of it. There is no doubt at all that Nonconformity, in the period before us, provided faith and hope for multitudes who could find it nowhere else in England. Three hundred years or more of Dissent might suggest to modern minds that a final answer to the implicit challenge of Rome has not been made in the Articles and formularies of the Church of England. In the early eighteenth century this defect was greatly emphasized by the fact that the Established Church, despite the brilliant contentions of Professor Norman Sykes¹, suffered a "decay" at least as serious as that which came upon the other bodies at the time. Far, then, from being arbitrary perversions of Christianity these despised and struggling sects were providing the Bread of Life for large sections of the community. It is true that many of their members were children of the third and fourth generations, but it was more than mere tradition that kept men like Isaac Watts, John Gale, Philip Doddridge and Edmund Calamy faithful to the meeting-house. Here and there the upper classes were represented, and nearly every congregation had merchants or smaller tradesmen among its members; but the Nonconformists were also zealous in seeking and serving the abandoned masses

1. "Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century". *Passim*.

who often lived in tragic misery and ignorance. The interest in these masses did not end with pity alone but was expressed in social effort and education. The Schism Bill is ample proof that Nonconformist schools were achieving some success before 1714. Nor were Dissenters totally indifferent to the wider forms of philanthropy. In William's reign the Unitarian, Thomas Firmin, was noted for his charities while his successors were frequently in close association with the religious societies which emerged about this time. "I this year" wrote Calamy¹ in 1699, "preached and printed a sermon to the 'Society for Reformation of Manners', at their common desire, and dedicated it to Sir Richard Levet. It deserves observation, that in this society, the Dissenters, from the first erection of it, were as heartily concerned as the Established Church, notwithstanding some have, upon occasion, shown they were not well pleased that it should be so." Nor can it be said that the meeting-house deterred its members from affairs and public life. Sir Humphrey Edwyne in 1697 and Sir Thomas Abney a few years later, became Lord Mayors of London, and their counterparts were to be found in many English towns. In short, it may be said with some degree of justice that a spiritual influence such as Nonconformity presented was not without its value in the State, and that this fact was not entirely lost upon the better Whig elements in 1727.

In the second place, Dissenters were in harmony with,

1. "Life and Times" i : 410.

and contributed to, the spirit of the age in their practice of "private judgement". We have already seen that this principle really inspired the organization, or church government, of early Baptists and Congregationalists, and it now became a prominent feature in doctrine as well. To some extent it had always been at work. The Baptist practice of administering baptism only to those who had definite Christian convictions had always been a striking example of the independent outlook. About 1689, however, this essentially Protestant attitude of mind began to influence doctrinal belief in a more direct and conscious way. A controversy brought about by the extreme Calvinistic and "antinomian" views of a Dissenting minister called Davies quickly involved the leading Nonconformists of the time and had some curious results. We may note in passing that Mr. Davies suffered for his views at the hands of his more liberal friends for the "United Brethren" in 1691 "Ordered that noe allowance shall henceforth be granted by this Board to Mr. Davies of Rowell in Northamptonshire."¹ The chief interest here, however, lies in the fact that the dispute, complicated by the appearance of Tobias Crisp's equally Calvinistic sermons, led Daniel Williams and some of his friends farther towards Arminian doctrine than they might at first have wished to go. But religious speculation once begun is seldom quickly ended and seems to have become so general by 1718 that Hubert Stogdon² could declare: "Men will no longer

1. "Minutes of the Presbyterian Fund" 1 : fol.57.
(Dr. William's Library.).

2. "Poems and Letters" ed. Billingsley. (1729).
Letter 2 (1718) p.46.

take things on trust; nor believe, because our forefathers, though ever so pious and venerable, told them so or so. But they will now immediately to the law and testimony; search the Scriptures themselves and see whether it be so or no." His letter was an echo of a famous case which brought the question to a head. The Exeter Nonconformists had long suspected that two of their leading ministers, James Peirce and Joseph Hallet, were far from "sound" on the doctrine of the Trinity, and in the end dismissed them from their posts on 10 March, 1719. Meanwhile, as we have elsewhere seen, the dispute had spread to London where the ministers of the Three Denominations divided at the Salters' Hall meeting on 24 February of the same year on the proposal to subscribe a declaration of their adherence to the orthodox faith and to send it with other exhortations to the friends at Exeter. The majority declined to do so not because they had adopted Arian views but because they hesitated to encroach on the rights of individuals and churches to make their own decisions in matters of faith. They wrote instead "We think the Protestant Principle, that the Bible is the only and the perfect Rule of Faith, obliges those who have the Case before them, not to condemn any Man upon the Authority of Humane Decisions, or because he consents not to Humane Forms or Phrases: But then only is He to be censured, as not holding the Faith necessary to Salvation, when it appears that he contradicts, or refuses to own, the plain and express Declarations of Holy Scripture; in what is there made necessary to be believed, and in Matters there solely

revealed. And we trust that All will treat the Servants of their common Lord, as they who expect the final Decision at his appearing."¹ And these words will serve to show how near Dissenters were to Chillingworth's "Authority" on the one hand, and on the other to the inevitable freedom of interpretation which neither Tillotson nor Hoadly could escape.

In summing up the value of this movement it must be freely admitted that, so far as organization was concerned, the exercise of private judgement was often narrow and contentious and frequently content with little more than separation from the Establishment. Yet even this was something in an age whose High Church doctrine was committed to the Divine Right of Kings and non-resistance to the Stuarts; and it is possible that here resided the real check to the formation in England of a "clerical" interest such as several continental countries saw. It may be further granted that the first effects of rational speculation were by no means a "light affliction, which is but for a moment;" but it may also be suggested that beliefs and doctrines which cannot stand the test of free inquiry are seldom worth retaining. Moreover, on the positive side, there is little doubt, as Dr. A. D. Lindsay says,² that the experience of self-government gained in small Dissenting meeting-houses contributed in no small measure to those free

1. "An Authentick Account of Several Things Done-- at Salter's Hall" p.31.

2. "Essentials of Democracy" Lect.I. passim.

local and even national institutions into which English life was rapidly being shaped. The fact seems to be that thinkers like John Locke, Churchmen like Hoadly and statesmen like Robert Walpole found their own essential outlooks to be strangely near to that of Nonconformity. They might have little love for Nonconformity as it actually appeared but they had no really valid grounds on which to justify a policy of extirpation.

In the third place we may observe that however much the prevailing spirit was one of division and sectarianism, there were many tentative efforts to achieve some unity among the various bodies of Dissent. The attempts were due in part to the abandonment of "national" aspirations by Presbyterians and Congregationalists, in part to some return of the spiritual ideals for which Nonconformity had originally stood. For nearly thirty years the supreme motive had appeared to be the securing of Toleration. The Toleration Act, with all its limitations, had achieved that end, but the removal of the immediate danger left Dissenters without the common interest which had been their chief uniting motive. It is a curious fact, therefore, that Toleration left its principal beneficiaries confused and uncertain, with the natural result that their best energies were diverted to extremely local and sectarian interests. From the first, however, it was dimly felt that unity was required and that it might be based on more enduring grounds than injustice and persecution. In the year of Toleration, for example, the Particular Baptists met in London and recorded their

proceedings in "A narrative of the proceedings of the General Assembly of divers pastors, messengers, and ministring brethren of the baptized churches, met together in London from Sept. 3 to 12, 1689, owning the doctrine of personal election and final perseverance. Sent from and concerned for more than one hundred congregations - -" This Assembly was maintained until 1692 when it was arranged that two yearly meetings should be held, one in London and the other in Bristol. After a very few years the London Assembly broke down but the Bristol meeting was continued as the Western Baptist Association. So far the Independent spirit had prevailed. The next Baptist efforts were on somewhat different lines. Largely by the labours of Benjamin Stinton a Fund was instituted on 4 June, 1717. The account of the first meeting runs,¹ "whereas several ministers and other persons who have the interest and welfare of the baptized churches in England very much at heart, have observed for some time with great grief and trouble the little correspondence and union that there is between those of that denomination; the great decay of that interest in some parts of England, and the difficulty they have to keep up the public worship of God, with any tolerable reputation, in other parts; the great want of able and well-qualified persons to defend the truth, and to supply those churches which are in want of ministers; the poverty and distress which some employed in that sacred office are exposed to for

1. "Paper of Proposals for raising a Fund, sent to the Several Congregations of Particular Baptists in and about London."

want of a competent maintenance for themselves and families; and the frequent applications that are made to some private persons on those occasions, who neither have ability to help all, nor opportunity to enquire into the truth and circumstances of every particular case: - it is therefore proposed and earnestly desired by the said persons, 1. That a public fund or stock be raised to redress these grievances." After the division of opinion at Salters' Hall in 1719 the cleavage between Particular and General Baptists was naturally accentuated. The former were averse to having General churches in their Fund so in 1726, at the instigation of Thomas Hollis, the General Baptist Fund was instituted and has continued ever since to aid churches of all shades of doctrinal belief. Meanwhile similar tendencies were at work in other bodies but the chief interest here attaches to a laudable attempt to unite both Presbyterians and Congregationalists in a single body. A joint deputation of the two bodies waited on King William on 2 January, 1689, and this friendly co-operation led to another meeting on 6 March, 1690, when the document known as the "Heads of Agreement" was considered and approved. The express purpose was declared "to be the maintaining of harmony and love among ourselves, and preventing the inconveniences which human weakness may expose us to in our use of this liberty. The general concurrence of ministers and people in this city, and the great disposition thereto in other places, persuade us this happy work is undertaken in a season designed for such Divine influence as will overcome all impediments to peace, and

convince of that agreement which has been always among us in a good degree, though neither to ourselves nor to others so evident as hereby it is now acknowledged."¹ The "happy union" thus begun was fated to dissolve by 1694, and thenceforward the two denominations concerned were content with unofficial co-operation. After the death of Anne this co-operation was continuous and intimate and began to embrace the Baptists as well. All three bodies were involved in the dispute at Salters' Hall in 1719, and all three benefited in the doubtful blessing of a yearly grant of one thousand pounds made by George I after 1723 to help necessitous ministers, and all united unofficially to present loyal addresses to the several monarchs of the period. In 1727 a further step was reached. "Immediately after they had presented the Address on his Majesty's (George II's) accession to the throne" says Ivimey,² "they held a general meeting of the Three Denominations, at the George, in Ironmonger-lane, July 11, 1727; at which meeting several resolutions were unanimously adopted, which formed into a body all approved ministers, whether Presbyterians, Independents, or Baptists, living within ten miles of the cities of London and Westminster. They also agreed, that a committee should be chosen to manage the affairs of the general Body, consisting of seven Presbyterians, six Independents, and six Baptists: these were to agree upon the persons who were to form the Society and to call the whole Body together when there should appear

1. "Heads of Agreement" Preface.
2. "Hist. of Baptists" iii : 196.

to them an occasion for their assembling." The movement was to spread, in a few years, to Dissenting laymen who founded the Society known as the Dissenting Deputies which still survives. But we may be sure that the political significance of the first official meeting in 1727 was not lost upon Sir Robert Walpole who had come into power.

A virile party possessing such religious, intellectual and social possibilities might at any time have had ample ground on which to claim an honourable freedom in the State, and, especially after 1714, might have sought it with some chance of success. But when we come to examine what the Dissenters thought and did about the matter we are once more conscious of a certain hesitation and an almost over-anxiety to please the ruling powers. In some degree this was the result of adverse circumstances which we have already tried to analyse but, so far as Toleration was concerned, there were other reasons too. For one thing, the Toleration Act excluded anti-Trinitarians and Roman Catholics even from the meagre liberty which "orthodox" Dissenters were themselves allowed and thereby widened the existing gulf that lay between them and these two outlawed extremes. If the Act of 1689 did not give complete religious liberty, at least it gave no liberty at all to Socinians and Papists; and, on the whole, Dissenters are not to be blamed if they tended to acquiesce in the arrangement whereby this negative advantage was secured. With regard to Papists, for example, their attitude throughout, and particularly at times of crisis like

the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, was exactly what it had been at the close of James II's reign; and this, as we have seen, could be approved by Churchmen and politicians and subsequent historians of the age¹. Then, further, we may trace a tendency, characteristic doubtless, of contemporary politics, to bargain and temporize. The Nonconformists had been obliged to fix their hopes in the Whig ascendancy and in spite of careless treatment by that party and the mingled threats and flatteries of the opposing faction, continued steadfast in their allegiance. "The Division of the People into Whig and Tory has been too long," wrote a pamphleteer in 1713,² "and the Party the Dissenters have been known to adhere to, is too Publick to have any Charge lie against them now for being Whigs: Nor shall this Letter go about to persuade them to be otherwise. Whig and Tory are not the Species of the present Parties; but the Division lies between the New Ministry and the Old, and their respective Dependencies." The same writer, however, thinking of the Act against Occasional Conformity, is careful to remind Dissenters that they had been "actually so sacrificed" by the Whig party and proceeds to warn them of the dangers consequent on such an alliance. "The Dissenters cannot be so weak to think that Her Majesty, and the Ministry under Her - - can want Power or are at a Loss for the proper Measures to subdue the Remains of a Discontented Party. - - The Dissenters cannot be so weak to think that they are able

1. Macaulay, for example. See above p.23.

2. "Letter to the Dissenters" (1713) p.10 sqq.

to support this Faction, and by joining with them to do anything but partake of their Punishment."¹ But the Dissenters remained firm and were rewarded in a special way in 1723 by a gift of money from King George which is known as the "Regium Donum". The immediate beneficiaries had apparently few qualms about eating from the royal hand. "I cannot see why they should not," says Edmund Calamy² - - - Nor would it be an easy thing to give a good and substantial reason, why we that are Dissenters in England, and excluded from the emoluments of the National Church, may not as warrantably receive a thousand pounds a year from the Government, as our Presbyterian brethren in Scotland do, in order to the promoting Christian knowledge in their Highlands." But the effect was inevitable; the Regium Donum was the price of silence. The methods which Sir Robert Walpole found effective elsewhere did not fail even in the religious field.

The policy which Dissenters were to follow through these years was curiously foreshadowed in the advice issued by the Quaker yearly meeting in May, 1689, which runs as follows: "Walk wisely and circumspectly towards all men, in the peaceable spirit of Christ Jesus, giving no offence or occasions to those in out-ward government, nor way to any controversies, heats or distractions of this world, about the kingdoms thereof. But pray for the good of all; and submit all to that Divine power and wisdom which rules over the

1. Ibid. p.13.

2. "Life and Times" ii : 472.

kingdoms of men. That, as the Lord's hidden ones, that are always quiet in the land, and as those prudent ones and wise in heart, who know when and where to keep silent, you may all approve your hearts to God; keeping out of all airy discourses and words, that may anyways become snares, or hurtful to Truth or Friends, as being sensible that any personal occasion of reproach causes a reflection upon the body."¹ ^{Who?} They did not produce an outstanding exposition of their claim and we may, in fact, agree that "their pamphlets on the subject were, compared with those of the last two reigns, few and far between, and the writers could do little but reproduce arguments already sadly threadbare."² Such writings as appeared were, in the main defensive and occasioned by direct attack or impending crisis in nearly every case. In some ways, too, it was unfortunate that one of their most brilliant apologetic essays should have been "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters" which came out in 1702. We need not question the sincerity and genius of Defoe, but while his genius entertained and irritated it is not quite so certain that it really helped the cause for which he wrote. His pamphlet made no positive contribution to the doctrine of religious liberty but it certainly stirred those Churchmen who had hailed it as "next to the Holy Bible and Sacred Comments"³ to inarticulate rage. Two years later a bitter pamphlet on traditional High Church lines entitled "The

1. Yearly Meeting Epistles, 1681-1857, 1 : 44-45.

2. Seaton "Theory of Toleration under the Later Stuarts" p.296.

3. Aitken "Later Stuart Tracts" p.189.

Memorial of the Church of England" provoked an answer in "The Memorial of the State of England" which appeared in 1705. This admirable tract declared that there must inevitably be differences of religious opinion and that each individual has a right to his own; and from this position which Hoadly so conspicuously held a few years later, went on to say, "The question is not if men's opinions be true, or their ceremonies the best, but if they be hurtful or not."¹ On this assumption the author argued on empirical grounds that diversity of religious beliefs is not only harmless and consistent with good government but is "so far from being dangerous, that it ought rather to be counted beneficial, as it creates a noble emulation in manners, learning, industry, and loyalty."² Persecution, on the other hand, fosters bitterness, deceit and barbarity, and to execute a man for "a religion by which you think salvation is not to be had, is no better nor worse than the action of that Italian, who made his enemy blaspheme God, and then stabbed him, that he might be damned."³ Thus all religious tests and penalties, however small, should be taken away for "there's no punishment so small but it justifies a greater." In 1710 the aged John Humfrey, now in his eighty-ninth year, attempted to define the boundaries of Toleration while the calamities that marked the closing years of Queen Anne's reign were already taking shape. "There is no toleration,"

1. "Memorial of the State of England" in Somers Tracts, xii : 547.
2. Ibid. p. 549.
3. Ibid. p. 548.

he affirmed,¹ "to be desired, or is desired of the sober Nonconformist, but one stated and so far agreed to in general, that the articles of our Christian faith, a good life, and the government of the nation be secured." But he stoutly maintained the right of the individual to disobey the laws which, in his judgement, did not fulfil these conditions. In 1714 the writer known as "Cati Brutus" delivered² himself thus to Englishmen in general and Dissenters in particular during the uncertainty attendant on the last illness of the Queen: "Awake, Awake; 'tis not a Time to Sleep: Your Liberties, your Liberties are in Danger! Awake, Awake; your Religion, your Religion is in Danger!" and compared in parallel columns the sorrows which befel Dissenters immediately before Her Majesty's death with those they had endured in Charles II's time. On 4 March, 1717 the Dissenting ministers presented an address to the King wherein they claimed that loyalty to his house and person and the cause for which he stood were the only reasons for their persecution and disfavour, "our principles being, we hope, the most friendly to mankind, and amounting to no more than that of a general Toleration of all peaceable subjects, and universal love and charity for all Christians, and to act always in matters of religion as God shall give us light into his will about them." This mild reminder is of interest not only for its bearing on the movement which began for the repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts, but also

1. Humfrey - "Free Thoughts" 56.

2. "Letter to the People of England" pp.8 and 22.

for its use by Sherlock in his long dispute with Hoadly. It was, in fact, the vehemence of Sherlock which enlisted Nonconformists such as Moses Lowman and James Peirce in the Bishop's cause which was, of course, their own. Peirce devoted the first part of his "Reflections upon Dean Sherlock's Vindication of the Corporation and Test Acts" to a vigorous attack on the policy which denied the occupancy of public offices to any person on religious grounds and proceeded to assert that even were this policy admissible at all it would be irrelevant in the particular case of the English Nonconformists. Incidentally he re-affirmed the right of private judgement and pointed out the now too obvious fact that persecution and disability only led to further trouble. As the next nine years which followed the repeal were more concerned with inward speculation than with outward policy, so far as Dissenters were concerned, we may conclude this outline with a characteristic extract from another of his pamphlets which appeared in that same year: "I Have now done with my first Point, that in Policy the Dissenters ought to be eas'd, which in Short is this, That since they are heartily in his Majesty's Interest, and a very considerable Part of his Strength, they ought to be put into a Capacity to serve him, if his Interest be consider'd they ought, because otherwise they may be tempted to desert it, in which case it must fall; or tho' they should stand firm yet it will not be possible to support it, if the Whigs act so inconsistently with their Character and the Conduct of their Ancestors, as the Neglecting this Opportunity will prove. "I Come now to my

Second Point, That in common Justice it ought to be done. And here after what has been said of the Principle and Behaviour of the Dissenters, and particularly of their Attachment to his Majesty's Interest; One would hope it should be thought no great Presumption to conclude, that in civil Respects they ought to be put upon a Level with the rest of his good Subjects: But because I know this Point has been disputed, I will as briefly as possible, set down a few of the many Reasons for it, which may be drawn from the Principles of common Justice.

"I Believe it will be acknowledg'd on all Hands, that the disabilities the Dissenters at present lie under are founded on a Religious Dispute, viz. Whether they ought at all Times, and in all Respects, to comply with the Establish'd Church. Let it then be consider'd, whether the Prerogative of God and His Empire over Conscience, are not hereby infring'd. We are told in Scripture, That God is a Spirit, and that those who Worship him must do it in Spirit and Truth: In other places, we are forbid to call any one Master but Christ, and caution'd not to Judge our Brethren, since to their own Master they stand or fall. This Caution is enforc'd upon us from the Consideration of that unerring Judgement which the great Searcher of Hearts will exercise in the last Day: For we shall all stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ, and there receive according to the things done in the Body. It follows, that whoever punishes another for Matters purely of a Religious Nature, as our Case is, either does it for that which God requires of all that come to him,

Namely, for Worshipping in Spirit and Truth, or in other Words, in that way which he thinks most agreeable to his Maker's Will, or else takes upon him to Judge of the Sincerity of his Heart, and anticipate the Judgement of the last Day: In both which Cases he usurp's upon the Prerogative of God, and does dishonour to him; In the first, by mis-using his peculiar Favorites, and best Subjects; in the second, by claiming a Power which God has reserv'd to himself; for he alone is the Searcher of the Heart, and the Tryer of the Reins of the Children of Men."¹

Finally, we must not overlook the service rendered to equality and justice by the practical resistance of the Quakers with regard to tithes and taking oaths. The former they consistently opposed and when arraigned at law chose prison rather than submission. In 1696 and on subsequent occasions Acts were passed by which two local Justices might ascertain the amount due and levy it by "distress" but the practical effects are thus described by Braithwaite: "The Acts did not compel the adoption of this cheap and summary process; and the clergy could still carry their tithe cases before the Exchequer or the Ecclesiastical Courts. Relief from this superfluous persecution was attempted in the Georgian days of Whig domination. It was shown that in the forty years prior to 1736 above 1100 Friends had been prosecuted before these Courts, of whom 302 had been imprisoned and nine had died in prison. In ten selected

1. Peirce: "Reasons for Enabling Protestant Dissenters to Bear Publick Offices." (1717) pp.32-33.

cases, £800 had been taken in respect of original demands amounting altogether to £15."¹ Their efforts with regard to oaths were more immediately successful. Christ had said, "Swear not at all,"² and Quakers held that the oath required in civil proceedings caused them to transgress this law. In 1695 George Whitehead used his influence with William III and his Ministers to such good purpose that the measure passed for the relief of Friends in May, 1696, permitted them to use an Affirmation formula instead of the usual oath. As the name of God was still retained in the Affirmation, chiefly on account of clerical opposition in the Lords, the Society remained dissatisfied. Accordingly, they persisted in their protest and in 1722, after the 1696 Act had been renewed several times, they secured an Affirmation consistent with their views. In general, however, the activities of Dissenters were for the most part carried on through personal influence with liberal Churchmen and Whig politicians, and they easily invoked the good offices of Bishops Burnet and Hoadly and statesmen such as Stanhope and Sunderland. The fact would seem to be that the establishment of law and Parliamentary government as against arbitrary dispensing power in 1688 had transferred the question of Toleration to the sphere of politics and imposed its finest exposition on the political philosopher, John Locke.

1. "Second Period of Quakerism." p.181.

2. Matt. v : 34.

III. Anti-Trinitarians and Roman Catholics.

There were certain others who, "dissenting from the Church of England," were still denied even the partial Toleration secured by the Three Denominations and the Friends. The provisions of the Toleration Act might only be enjoyed "Provided always, and be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, that neither this act, nor any clause, article, or thing, herein contained shall extend to give any ease, benefit, or advantage, to any papist or popish recusant whatsoever, or any person that shall deny, in his preaching or writing, the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, as it is declared in the aforesaid articles of religion¹." This limiting condition, in which the orthodox Dissenters heartily concurred, thus denied all legal rights to Roman Catholics and to that indefinite but considerable body of Socinians, Atheists and Deists who in one form or another disagreed with what the early eighteenth century held to be the Christian faith. Neither of these groups was destined to attain conspicuous importance in the immediate future; but the place they occupied with regard to Toleration after 1689 will justify a more detailed examination of their doctrines and activities.

Those who were regarded as "denying the doctrine of the blessed Trinity" may here be roughly classified as anti-Trinitarians proper and Deists. Though these had much

1. Toleration Act.

in common in the early eighteenth century they really came of two distinct traditions and, in the last resort, perhaps expressed two different attitudes to life. The anti-Trinitarians ultimately formed the Unitarian Church; the Deists, though they now attained unusual prominence and though many of their views have since become the commonplaces of theology, never formed a distinct body and left no ecclesiastical posterity behind them.

The failure to accept the orthodox conception of the Godhead as a Trinity of Persons was by no means new. In the second and third Christian centuries this really lay behind the Monarchian and Sabellian "heresies" and was the mainspring of the Arian controversy in the fourth; but it was the liberating atmosphere of the Protestant Reformation which permitted this persistent doubt to grow into a positive doctrine which might appeal to modern minds. Its adherents were at all times careful to affirm that they were Christians and became most numerous in Poland, Transylvania and, somewhat later, in the Netherlands. Their membership included men like Bassen, Denck, Servetus and Socinus from the last of whom the familiar term "Socinian" was ultimately derived. They were, of course, persistently and bitterly opposed by Roman Catholic and Protestant authorities alike though on this we need not dwell beyond suggesting that their continued growth in numbers once again reveals the essential futility of persecution in matters of opinion and faith. It is, however, difficult to say what direct connection existed between these Continental Socinians and their English

brethren who began to appear about the middle of the seventeenth century. At any rate, by 1665, their strength was such that Dr. Owen¹ wrote, "The evil is at the door, there is not a city, a town, scarce a village in England, wherein some of this poison is not poured forth." They easily survived the years of Stuart persecution and though they were denied the benefits of Toleration in 1689 the situation as a whole had changed and the times become more genial to their point of view. We need, for instance, only mention names like those of Thomas Firmin, Samuel Clarke and William Whiston, Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, to illustrate considerable acceptance of Socinian beliefs before the death of Anne. Moreover, at the time of which we write, those Socinians who had arrived at their conclusions by more or less independent processes of thought were joined by others who had reached a similar position by some curious developments of doctrine in the "orthodox" sects. The starting point for this new accretion was the prevalence or adoption of Arminian views in both Anglican and Nonconformist quarters where the doctrines of John Calvin had begun to lose their one-time favour. The Anglican Arminians found an outlet in the Latitudinarian movement, so brilliantly defended and adorned by the Whig episcopate which came to power with William III; and for the most part they retained their livings in outward peace and with not too much distress of conscience. With Dissenters it was different. The

1. Mellone; art. "Unitarianism". Chambers Encyclopedia.

Congregationalists, indeed, continued steadfast and unmoveable in the doctrines of Geneva; but the General Baptists, persisting in the milder tenets of Arminianism which they had cherished from an early date, began, especially after the dispute at Salters' Hall, to show increasing tendencies to pass into Socinianism. It was, however, from the Presbyterians that the greatest number came, for it would be difficult to parallel the inward change which took place within that body in the sixty years that followed their expulsion from the Church of England in 1662. By well marked stages they passed from the severest Calvinism first to Arminianism, and thence by "Arian" views to what can only be described as incipient Unitarianism. By 1719, for example, the redoubtable James Peirce of Exeter and Salters' Hall renown, was thus impelled to write¹: "We are sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the World, that He died for our sins, rose again from the dead, etc. We are sure that there is but one God the Father, because the Scriptures are express in saying so, but we cannot be so certain that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one God, because the Scripture never so much as once says so." It is clear from this quotation, which is typical of many pamphlets that appeared, that the major issues turned upon the Personality of Christ and the nature of the Trinity; the authority of Scripture, for example, had not so far been seriously called in question. In 1715, it is true, the

1. "Plain Christianity Defended" (1719) i : 29.

suggestion had been made by Richard Bentley that a certain text¹, frequently adduced by Trinitarians in support of their belief, had been added to the Scriptures by a later hand; but, in general, this school of anti-Trinitarians confined their exercise of private judgement to examining the nature of the Godhead. It was left to the Deists to apply the method in other directions as well.

The name of Deists was bestowed on certain writers on religious subjects who at this time gained a prominence out of all proportion to the merits of their work. They formed no separate body and, so far as they had any church connections at all, were usually members of the Church of England. It is hardly possible to summarise their views for their labours, not infrequently, were entirely negative and critical, and each attacked that aspect of accepted truth which in his judgement most offended Reason. The movement was, in fact, a sharp reaction from authoritative Christian doctrine in the direction of what has since come to be called "natural" religion. Its inspiration lay in that expansion of the intellectual field which, suppressed and driven underground for many generations, came almost suddenly to light towards the end of the seventeenth century. Sir Isaac Newton,

"voyaging through strange seas of thought alone", had not merely developed and confirmed the views put forward long before by Galileo and Copernicus, but had shown that the

1. I John V : 7. See Griffiths "Religion and Learning" pp.119 sq. for a full account of the transition.

sublime and flattering conception of the earth as centre of the universe could no longer be maintained except, perhaps, as a congenial subject for the poetic genius of a Milton. It was long indeed, as Sir Leslie Stephen says¹, "before science was to be formally opposed to revelation, and the Mosaic cosmogony to be directly attacked. And yet, it was already whispered that the first chapter of Genesis was hardly an adequate prologue to the development of the universal drama. Geology, still in its earliest infancy, had prompted Thomas Burnet to suggest an allegorical interpretation of the primitive records. Like many other rationalisers he fancied himself to be confirming instead of weakening Scriptural authority; but his intimations indicated that the universe must be extended in time as well as in space, and that the traditional 6000 years hardly gave room enough to the scientific imagination." Above all, perhaps, two hundred years of daring exploration had widened out the very world in which men lived. Strange coloured races, with traditions and religions of their own, who had not even heard the name of Jesus Christ, presented an uncomfortable problem to the dogma of the West. If Christian faith alone afforded life eternal and if ignorance thereof entailed damnation of the soul, was this arrangement to extend, for instance, to the millions of Chinese for whom no preacher had as yet gone forth? It was, in fact, the knowledge of these multitudes which had led Lord Herbert of Cherbury, three-quarters of a

1. "English Thought in the Eighteenth Century" 1 : 81.

century before, to question the precise and inhuman doctrines of contemporary Churchmen, and led him to suggest a tolerant attitude to views which were at variance with tradition. But though Lord Herbert was reputedly a father of the Deist movement it was not until 1696 that it began to claim attention from the orthodox divines. In that year there appeared a book entitled "Christianity not Mysterious, or a Discourse showing that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason nor above it, and that no Christian Doctrine can properly be called a Mystery." The author, as a second edition which appeared within the year disclosed, was a young man called John Toland whose spiritual history had included an experiment of Roman Catholic faith. The result of Toland's work was the Deist controversy which raged for nearly twenty years and stimulated friend and foe alike to remarkable passion and abuse. On its champions and methods we may venture once again to quote the incomparable historian¹ of eighteenth century thought. "It would be difficult" he says, "to mention a controversy in which there was a greater disparity of force. The physiognomy of the books themselves bears marks of the difference. The deist writings are but shabby and shrivelled little octavos, generally anonymous, such as lurk in the corners of dusty shelves, and seem to be the predestined prey of moths. Against them are arrayed solid octavos and handsome quartos and at times even folios - very Goliaths among books, too

1. Sir Leslie Stephen, op. cit. i : 86.

ponderous for the indolence of our degenerate days, but fitting representatives of the learned dignitaries who compiled them. On the side of Christianity, indeed, appeared all that was intellectually venerable in England. Amongst the champions of the faith might be reckoned Bentley, incomparably the first critic of the day; Locke, the intellectual ruler of the eighteenth century; Berkeley, acutest of English metaphysicians and most graceful of philosophic writers; Clarke, whom we may still respect as a vigorous gladiator, and then enjoying the reputation of a great master of philosophic thought; Butler, the most patient, original, and candid of philosophical theologians; Waterland, the most learned of contemporary divines; and Warburton, the rather knock-kneed giant of theology, whose swashing blows, if too apt to fall upon his allies, represented at least a rough intellectual vigour. Around these great names gathered the dignitaries of the Church, and those who aspired to church dignity, for the dissection of a deist was a recognised title to preferment. Sherlock and Gibson and Conybeare and Smalbroke, and other occupants of the bench, gained or justified promotion by their share in the crusade; and amongst the rank and file were such men as Sykes and Balguy and Stebbing, and a host of other diligent penmen, now for the most part as much forgotten as their victims. - - Two of the deists, indeed, claimed respect as men of rank and of considerable pretensions to taste. But Shaftesbury, though a man of real power, attacked orthodoxy in a most oblique fashion; and Bolingbroke's 'blunderbuss'

missed fire, because discharged when the controversy was nearly extinct. Mandeville, perhaps the acutest of the deists, made, like Shaftesbury, an indirect and covert assault. Collins, a respectable country gentleman, showed considerable acuteness; Toland, a poor denizen of Grub Street, and Tindal, a Fellow of All Souls, made a certain display of learning and succeeded in planting some effective arguments. Below them we must make a rapid descent, to find fitting places for poor mad Woolston, most scandalous of the deists, and Chubb, the good Salisbury tallow-chandler, who ingenuously confesses, whilst criticising the Scriptures, that he knows no language but his own. Morgan, and two or three anonymous writers, do little more than reflect the arguments of Tindal and Toland; while Annet, a broken-down schoolmaster, is a rather disreputable link between Woolston and Thomas Paine". This unequal warfare on Socinians and Deists was not confined to pamphlets, and had sympathetic reactions beyond the Tweed and across the Irish Sea. In Scotland, for example¹, an Act of Parliament passed in 1661 against "the crime of blasphemy" imposed the penalty of death on any person who "not being distracted in his wits, shall rail upon or curse God, or any of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity." This measure was renewed on 28 June, 1695 and led on 8 January, 1697, to what has rightly been described as the judicial murder of a student called Aikenhead on the ground of some irresponsible remarks which were unreservedly

1. See Alexander Gordon's Essex Hall Lecture for 1913
"Heresy" p.34.

withdrawn before his death. A melancholy feature of this horrible affair was the zeal with which local ministers, including William Lorimer, first of Dr. Williams' trustees and Moderator of the "subscribing" party at Salters' Hall in 1719, "spoke and preached for cutting him off." In Ireland Thomas Emlyn was more fortunate when tried at the Queen's Bench in Dublin for publishing a blasphemy in 1703. "The Nonconformists accused him," Bishop Hoadly tells¹ us, "the Conformists condemned him, the secular power was called in, and the cause ended in an imprisonment and a great fine, two methods of conviction of which the Gospel is silent." In England, meantime, notwithstanding Toland's statement that he wrote his book to defend Christianity and prayed that God would give him grace to vindicate religion, the orthodox denominations were at one in condemnation. His work was vilified in every pulpit and the Lower House of Convocation condemned it as heretical and blasphemous though the Upper House declined to ratify their finding. But no one now could stem the tide of hate. In 1697 a deputation of Dissenting ministers who had for several years looked jealously upon the work of certain anonymous Socinian pamphleteers inspired, it is believed, by Thomas Firmin, asked King William III to institute some legal measure against unrestrained blasphemy. Accordingly in 1698 an Act² was passed "for the more effectual suppressing of

1. Ibid. p. 36.

2. 9 Will. III. c. 35. (Otherwise 9 and 10 Will. III. c. 32)

blasphemy and prophaneness" which penalized such persons as "having been educated in, or at any time having made profession of the Christian religion within this realm -- shall by writing, printing, teaching, or advised speaking, deny any one of the persons in the Holy Trinity to be God, or shall assert or maintain there are more gods than one." But the outcry and the measures against Deists and Socinians were mercifully barren of effect for the controversy proved to be less serious than had at first appeared to be the case. The Deist ground, in fact, was undermined from the beginning. Its attitude, and even some of its conclusions, had already been anticipated both by Latitudinarians and liberal Nonconformists whose resultant doctrine, however partial and incomplete, was yet more solid and consistent than any that the Deists could have shaped. ^{Who?} They contended for concessions that had already been made; and the resounding controversy died away almost as quickly as it had begun.

The influence of Deists on the question of Toleration may be regarded in two ways. In the first place, their particular approach to religion and morals bore indirectly on the subject; in the second place, some of them applied themselves directly to the problem.

As to the first of these the mere fact that they freely exercised independent judgement in matters of religion may still be regarded as of great ultimate value to subsequent English thought. Bossuet, in his notable "Histoire des Variations," had declared free-thought to be inseparable from Protestantism and easily demonstrated to his own

satisfaction that the final effects of its adoption would be general disintegration. This plausible conclusion has been, and still is, frequently repeated, but on the long view of history it must be wholly set aside. In the last resort the greater part of men will choose the truth, however disturbing, rather than continue in a fabric of expedient lies. No one will deny that the Deist efforts were feeble and at times disreputable, but at least they were directed to the truth as each of them conceived it. The very titles of their books reveal a growing discontent with many current dogmas and the expression of such discontent was in itself of value. The value and the failure of the Deist movement is, in fact, pathetically patent in all its written works. Here, for example, is the consistent attitude of the third Earl of Shaftesbury. "It is" he wrote¹, "no small interest or concern with men to believe what is by authority established, since in the case of disbelief there can be no choice left but either to live a hypocrite or be esteemed profane. In a country where faith has for a long time gone by inheritance, and opinions are entailed by law, there is little room left for the vulgar to alter their persuasions or deliberate on the choice of religious belief. When a government thinks fit to concern itself with men's opinions, and by absolute authority impose any particular belief, there is none perhaps ever so ridiculous or monstrous in which it needs doubt having good success." No doubt this attitude of cynical

1. "Miscellaneous Reflections" pt. II Sect.3.

contempt was hopeless ground on which to take a stand and seriously impaired the value of the Deist point of view; but it was all too common with their ablest men. "Better take things as they are," he says again¹, "Laugh in your sleeve, if you will, at the follies which priestcraft has imposed upon mankind; but do not show your bad taste and bad humour by striving to battle against the stream of popular opinion. When you are at Rome, do as Rome does. The question 'What is truth' is a highly inconvenient one. If you must ask it, ask it to yourself." This deplorable insincerity was only equalled in that sardonic arrangement whereby the Deistical opinions of Lord Bolingbroke, himself the arch-persecutor of the time, were withheld from publication until his death had placed him beyond the reach of immediate consequences. The lesser Deists, who were more sincere were hopelessly out-argued in the controversy but their efforts, none the less, expressed once more the fundamental need of man to form opinions for himself.

Then, further, the Deists, and to a less extent, the Socinians, did not merely exercise private judgement in a specific case, but urged the ultimate supremacy of "Reason" in every aspect of Christian faith. In the book that launched the controversy Toland² thus began: "In the following discourse, which is the first of three, and wherein I prove my subject in general, the divinity of the New Testament is taken for granted. In the second, I attempt

1. "Sensus Communis" Sect.4.

2. "Christianity not Mysterious" Preface.

a particular and rational explanation of the reputed mysteries of the Gospel. In the third I demonstrate the verity of the Divine Revelation against Atheists and all enemies of revealed religion." The veneration shown in this naive confession for the supposedly infallible quality of reason was shared by Anthony Collins in his "Discourse of Freethinking",¹ and by Matthew Tindal and other Deists in their several works, and really places them at one with the general temper of the age. But with them as with the Latitudinarians this resort to reason could have only one result. If the use of reason led sincere and honest men to the most divergent conclusions the necessity for Toleration followed almost as a self-evident fact.

Finally, despite their many affirmations of fidelity, the Deists really launched a serious assault against "revealed" religion and in so doing struck at what has always been one² of the two great reasons for persecution. The essentially "High Church" conception of Christianity as a body of supernatural truth once for all delivered to the saints, rejection of which consigned the soul to eternal damnation, had brought many nearer home than Huguenots or Albigenses to the scaffold or the stake, for it could be argued plausibly by the sacerdotal mind that the spread of heresy was a mortal danger to the faithful and their posterity. Whatever, therefore, we may think of their performance as a whole, there is little doubt that Toland

1. Published in 1713.

2. The other is the political interests which have been continually present in religious history.

and his friends were attempting to perform a needful and a long-neglected service in seeking to maintain that Christianity was "not mysterious".

Of the Deists who applied themselves directly to the question of Toleration by far the ablest were Matthew Tindal and that same Earl of Shaftesbury whose equivocal position has been pointed out already.

Matthew Tindal was a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford who, after a short experiment in Roman Catholicism in James II's time, had returned before the Revolution to the Church of England and had ultimately become a most effective exponent of Deism. He was sufficiently expert in international law to be consulted on occasion by the Government. In 1697 he produced a work entitled "An Essay concerning the Power of the Magistrate and the Rights of Mankind in Matters of Religion", and opened his discussion with a tribute to John Locke, for the subject, he declared¹, had been "in a manner wholly exhausted by the three incomparable Letters on Toleration". How far the author and his school had moved from the traditional Stuart doctrine of the Divine Right of temporal rulers is manifest on every page. The magistrate's commission, he contended, rests upon the people's will and does not come from God. His authority, in consequence, is limited to the secular relationships of men or, at most, to those aspects of religion which directly affect those relationships; but it stops short at "those opinions and

1. Tindal, "Power of the Magistrate" p.2.

actions which relate to God alone in which no third person has an interest".¹ In fact the duty of the magistrate is the protection rather than the suppression of such personal and intimate beliefs, and the practice of coercion in such matters really establishes the right of victims to resist it by force and if need be to overthrow the persecutor. Tindal has, of course, no difficulty in showing that persecution drives men to hypocrisy, destroys the spirit of Christianity and utterly dishonours the conception of the goodness of God. The right of private judgement is upheld throughout the book and answers are essayed to old familiar contentions that the good of individuals and society require the suppression of error and the multiplication of sects. "If force prevents men from running into errors" he argued², "it must be because it hinders men from freely and impartially examining matters of religion - - And as error where impartial diligence is used is wholly innocent; so where it's neglected, the accidental stumbling on truth will not justify or excuse the neglect of it: therefore if it should tend to hinder error by preventing men from impartially considering, it would not give the magistrate a right to use force. - - As to merely religious or speculative points of the true religion, men's lusts or passions, since these are in no way concerned how those are held, do not incline them to prefer falsehood before truth. And as for those parts of religion wherein men's lusts and passions may be supposed to sway them, those

1. Tindal, *ibid.* p.7.

2. *Ibid.* p.108.

I own (as far forth as my adversaries) do belong to the magistrate's jurisdiction, and all men for the sake of the common good are obliged to get them believed and practised; for it's equally the interest of governors and governed to embrace the true religion, contrived by the infinite wisdom of God for the benefit of mankind." In a later book¹ the author re-affirmed his views but added little to his former arguments; but it should be put on record that he advocated the removal of the notorious Test Act whereby the Protestant Dissenters were excluded from all civil offices in the State.

There is, of course, an obvious literary contrast between the laboured prose of Tindal and the graceful irony of Shaftesbury; but here, as in so many cases, the perfection of ironic art has to some extent defeated the very end it was designed to serve. Moreover there are glaring faults of reason in Shaftesbury's position as a whole which doubtless robbed his real wisdom of the credit it deserved. But when we make allowance for these obvious defects we find a clear, incisive mind at work on many pressing subjects of which religious liberty continued to be one. He naturally places faith in what was taken to be "Reason" and thence proceeds to argue that even Atheists, with some exceptions which are none too clear, should be exempt from persecution in matters of religion. "If reason" he declared², "be needful, force in the meanwhile must be laid aside; for there is no enforcement of reason but by reason. And therefore if atheists are to be

1. "The Rights of the Christian Church" (1706) Introduction.
2. "The Moralists" (1709) Pt.II, Sect.3.

reasoned with at all they are to be reasoned with like other men, since there is no other way in Nature to convince them." That, at least, is clear enough, but the practical effects of the general use of Reason were painfully apparent all around. The one way out was Toleration and from this he does not shrink. "There can" he said¹, "be no rational belief but where comparison is allowed, examination permitted, and a sincere toleration established. There is nothing so ridiculous in respect of policy, or so wrong and odious in respect of common humanity, as a moderate and half-way persecution - - If there be on earth a proper way to render the sacred truth suspected, 'tis by supporting it with threats, and pretending to terrify people into the belief of it." The value of such views consisted in the fact that they were coming to be dimly felt by multitudes of ordinary men; and we shall later see how closely they agreed with all that Locke had said in the "three incomparable Letters on Toleration."

A somewhat briefer treatment may suffice for Roman Catholics as their position has been indicated to some extent in previous references to the intense Protestant sentiments which at this time characterised the great majority of Englishmen. The Roman Catholic question really lies outside the main historical development of English Toleration for it was by force of circumstances rather than by any kind of

1. "Miscellaneous Reflections" (1711) Pt. II, ch. III.

choice that they found themselves in a position so much resembling that of the Dissenters. Only the supreme irony of events had placed them side by side with anti-Trinitarians in exclusion from the benefits of 1689.

Their case, of course, throughout these years, was hopelessly pre-judged by their political attachments. The unhappy Stuart king whose abdication left an empty throne for William III had been a zealous rather than a prudent member of the Roman communion and, consequently, all his follies and injustices became associated in contemporary judgement with his creed. In his exile James had found asylum at the court of Louis XIV, the avowed protagonist of Papal claims, whose insatiable ambitions had disturbed the greater part of Europe and were to implicate the English in a serious and costly war. Even so, there were many Roman Catholics who would have chosen to continue quietly in such liberty as altered fortunes would allow them, but the machinations of their priests and the alarms occasioned by attempted Jacobite rebellions laid them open to perpetual suspicion and abuse. Thus, as we have seen, they became the victims of direct restrictive measures¹ under William, Anne and George, as well as of the indirect implications of the various Oaths and Acts of Settlement by which the Crown was secured for the Electress Sophia and her heirs. Meanwhile, growing colonies of French Protestant refugees were bearing tangible if pathetic testimony to the methods which the Roman Church herself

1. eg. in 1699, 1715 and 1722. A Bill promoted in 1706 was, however, rejected. See above. p.42.

employed towards dissenting minorities, and a scandalized English chaplain¹ at Lisbon was informing Bishop Burnet of an auto-da-fe in which a woman writhed among the burning faggots for more than half an hour before her merciful release by death. These incredible atrocities inevitably led the advocates of Toleration to another aspect of the matter. Should Toleration be extended in a free nation to a party or a sect which was itself irreconcilably opposed to freedom? To this we shall return at a later stage, but meantime it is worth observing that John Locke himself, whose "Letters" first appeared in English form in 1689 felt compelled to answer in the negative. In measured language², which all but names the Roman See, he speaks of those who cherish claims and dogmas which had been too patently "eternal" in that Church's creed and which had come perilously near a practical fulfilment in the antecedent thirty years; and thus proceeds: "These therefore, and the like, who attribute unto the faithful, religious, and orthodox, that is, in plain terms, unto themselves, any peculiar privilege or power above other mortals, in civil concerns; or who, upon pretence of religion, do challenge any manner of authority over such, as are not associated with them in their ecclesiastical communion; I say these have no right to be tolerated by the magistrate; as neither those that will not own and teach the duty of tolerating all men in matters of

1. Wilcox, later Bishop of Rochester to Burnet, 1706. See this letter in full in Chandler's "Hist. of Persecution" (1736) p.287.

2. Locke "Letters on Toleration" pp.30-31. (Alexander Murray's Reprint, London 1870).

mere religion. For what do all these and the like doctrines signify, but that they may, and are ready upon any occasion to seize the government, and possess themselves of the estates and fortunes of their fellow-subjects; and that they only ask leave to be tolerated by the magistrate so long, until they find themselves strong enough to effect it."

In face of all these circumstances the Roman case was not an easy one and perhaps some instinct of the real problem it involved accounts for the fact that throughout the later stages of religious persecution in England their apologists and pamphleteers were curiously silent on the subject of Toleration.¹ Their case, when stated, always seemed to need the help of fervent declarations of attachment to the throne and State, and the very fervour of these declarations lent an air of unreality to the efforts which, in other ways, were justified and relevant. Thus, in 1703, a pamphlet from a Roman Catholic pen presented an appeal not only for Toleration but for a removal of civil disabilities. "I could not discern" the author wrote², "by what means the English Common Prayer Book did qualify any man for a public trust, any more than the presbyterian directory or the Popish mass-book; for there are honest men and knaves of all persuasions. If I am a native of England, and am both as able and willing to serve the government as you are, I have thereby as much

1. This is specially true of Charles II's reign. Probably some of the pamphlets which attacked the Test after James' accession emanated from Roman Catholic sources.
2. "An Apology for Roman Catholics" (1703)
Somers Tracts, XII : 241.

natural right to serve the public as you have - - - 'Tis true that transubstantiation is a proper test whereby to find out a Roman Catholic: but in my opinion it will not be a sufficient test whereby to discover whether that Roman Catholic be a lover of his country or not. Make us therefore a test whereby an honest Catholic may distinguish himself by owning the Queen's rightful title to the crown of England, and all its dependencies, and by disowning the Pope's pretended authority upon any account in this realm." Contentions such as these, to which no reasonable man would normally object, might well have stood alone; but the author thought it wise to reinforce his arguments by reference to contemporary happenings in France. "None but a traitor" he goes on, "could say that there was any rebellion in the kingdom of France, sith that the rightful sovereignty over France is lodged in the Queen's majesty, whose Protestant French subjects (the Camisards) arose in their own defence against the lawless usurpation and tyranny of Lewis XIV."

On the whole, however, it is generally agreed that the anti-Roman penal laws were as little carried out in practice as those against Socinians and Deists. Roman Catholics at most were a very small minority and if they willed might live in comparative security. When Tallard came to England as Ambassador for France after the Peace of Ryswick, it seems he found that the Roman Catholic religion was "here tolerated more openly than it was even in the time of King Charles II, and it seemed evident that the King of England had determined

to leave it at peace in order to secure his own."¹ We may infer that this condition of affairs continued into Hanoverian times from certain observations made in a published work of 1722. "To the North of Winchester," it is recorded² "there was a very large Monastery, a handsome Part of which still remains; - - inhabited by Roman Catholics; where they have a private Chapel, for the Service of the Gentlemen of that Religion thereabouts, of which there are several of Note, and who have good Estates, but live very quiet and friendly with their Neighbours: They have also a private Seminary for their Children Three Miles off, where they prepare them for the Colleges abroad." Defoe, too, saw Roman Catholics in various parts of England go as publicly to Mass as Dissenters to their meeting-houses. At Durham, for example, about 1725, he found³ that "notwithstanding the residence of so many dignified protestant clergy, there are still great numbers of Roman Catholics in this city." The fact would seem to be that save for moments of unusual crisis the Roman Catholics were left alone even in the public exercise of their religion.

On the whole, we may conclude, in looking back upon the scene, that the growth of Toleration was continuous if slow. The English Reformation in its main development had not been

1. Quoted by Seaton, "Toleration under the Later Stuarts" p.280.
2. J.Macky. "Journey through England, in Familiar Letters from a Gentleman here to his Friend abroad" ii : 29. (1722).
3. "A Tour through the Island of Great Britain" iii : 224 (1776).

so complete as many could have wished it to have been and consequently, side by side with the Established Church there grew up a body of Dissent. The two at first were thought to be essentially opposed, as the very names of Dissent and Nonconformity imply. By 1689 the consciousness was dimly felt that they might really be supplementary and the first hostility of Anglicans, who so long possessed the power to persecute or tolerate, began to lose a little of its bitterness. A number of their ablest men began to seek a better way in dealing with Dissent and this most laudable endeavour was helped from the Dissenter's side in two particular ways which we may now attempt to summarize.

In the first place, Nonconformity possessed some elements of great intrinsic value for life in all its aspects. Its members were the "better sort of men", conspicuous for piety and uprightness of life, who concerned themselves with charitable and social activities especially among the poorer classes.¹ Their adhesion to the Bible, however prejudiced and narrow on occasions, was yet a true instinct to seek the truths of historical Christianity in its original sources, and endowed them with a certain simplicity and honesty of character. They valued and conserved the experiences of mysticism when these came their way and, insisting on "conversion" and the future life, gave dignity and value to the individual soul. They thus promoted, even if

1. Thomas Firmin, for example, financed a linen business, employing as many as 1700 poor persons, for several years until his death in 1697. The venture never paid.

unconsciously, the spirit of enquiry and private judgement which has not yet ceased to be by far the finest inspiration of English thought and life.

In the second place, and here we may with justice include the Roman Catholics too, the passing years revealed beyond the shadow of a doubt that the presence of Dissent was detrimental neither to religion nor society. There were frequent opportunities to prove this fact in the forty years between the Toleration Act and the first of Walpole's measures of Indemnity. At times, indeed, it had appeared that Nonconformists were less dangerous to the State than certain sections of the Church of England. Their loyalty, in fact, to constitutional forms through all these changing years contrasted strangely with the treatment they received.

These truths were slowly dawning on the national mind, but Dissenters did not press their claims so freely as they might have done. The period for them was eminently transitional and they were often far from certain of their own inherent genius. Internecine disputes and sectarian rivalries absorbed their finest energies when common action was required. Thus after forty years the orthodox Dissenters only found relief from year to year whilst Socinians and Roman Catholics were left outside the law. But it is only fair to add that Toleration, after all, was comparatively new in modern thought and that serious men are hardly to be blamed if they approached so radical a change with caution.

Even Jesus is reported to have said¹: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

1. John xvi : 12.

CHAPTER 3.

SECULAR POLITICS AND PHILOSOPHY.

Beneath the civil and religious struggles which marked the course of English history in the seventeenth century a fundamental issue had been joined between two wholly divergent views on the nature of society. The first of these, to which St. Augustine had given his approval a thousand years before, began with an austere conception of a supernatural Power, revealed in the historic Christian faith, which claimed from men unquestioning obedience in every walk of life. Society was divinely organized and directed in the light of this revelation, and its practical affairs or politics were looked upon as questions of theology. This view of life found expression, at one time or another, in such terms as authority, the divine right of princes and non-resistance to the ruling power; and it still enjoyed a measure of that special veneration which long familiarity and general acceptance usually give. The second view, which ultimately triumphed in the Western world, came later in historic time and sought to found society on rational or humanistic grounds. Its most familiar terms are social contract, individual judgement, the rights of man and, above all perhaps, liberty. It is more than possible that keen dissatisfaction had been felt with the formulated doctrines of St. Augustine for centuries before it found articulate expression. It is certainly discernible at the Renaissance and assumed, after the Reformation of the sixteenth century,

a definitely positive character. In England a decisive stage was reached in 1688, for the true significance of the Revolution was the final triumph of the secular state. From that time forward politics was not merely independent of theology but made successful claims to be supreme in all departments of social life. Thus, questions such as Toleration, which had once belonged entirely to religion were now to be determined by Parliaments and civil law.

The growth of the humanistic or rational as opposed to the theological conception of society had long been evident in the practical affairs of trade and politics but in 1689 a master was at hand to place it on a basis of philosophy; for the writings of John Locke may not unfairly be regarded as furnishing for modern times what Augustine's "De Civitate Dei" had given to an earlier age. So we may now consider the Toleration of Dissenters as it was affected by commercial and political activities and conclude the whole with some account of Locke's considered treatment of a problem which had exercised the greatest minds for many generations.

I. Trade and Party Politics.

The question of Toleration in England was a practical one from the beginning. We need not doubt, of course, that high ideals and broad conceptions of justice played important parts in bringing it about, but an unprejudiced view suggests that in the last resort the numbers and the quality of the Dissenters compelled a peaceful settlement. Their practical importance may conveniently be traced in two directions. In

the first place they were competent and active in commercial life and, in the second, their support in party politics became an element of steadily increasing consequence. To some extent these factors have already been implied but a true appreciation of the question as a whole demands some further treatment here.

In the present century the "loss of nerve" which has assailed the capitalist system has led to widespread condemnation of its methods and its origins. "Capitalism," we are told¹, "in the sense of great individual undertakings, involving the control of large financial resources, and yielding riches to their masters as a result of speculation, money-lending, commercial enterprise, buccaneering and war, is as old as history. Capitalism, as an economic system, resting on the organisation of legally free wage-earners, for the purpose of pecuniary profit, by the owner of capital or his agents, and setting its stamp on every aspect of society, is a modern phenomenon." The rise of this phenomenon was roughly parallel in time with that of Nonconformity; and thus the Nonconformists, who at one time or another, have been blamed for every evil in the heavens above and in the earth beneath seem likely to be charged as well with the various abuses which the modern economic system is beginning to reveal. But Englishmen in general have little reason to lament the rise and spread of commerce and,

1. R.H.Tawney, in Weber. "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" Introd. Ib.

in any case, it still remains a plausible hypothesis that industry and trade would have been essentially the same had Dissent been utterly unknown. Moreover, it is well to bear in mind that Anglicans and even Roman Catholics were equally as interested as any Nonconformist in the growing opportunities for new and profitable enterprise. Professor Clark reminds¹ us that "English Roman catholics, who had been settled for generations in dignified segregation, made their contribution to this movement of thought. - - 'Political arithmetic,' or statistical science began in our period, and it was altogether alien to the medieval state of mind in which ethical considerations governed economics. Of its two founders one, John Graunt, became a catholic. The other, Sir William Petty, had part of his education at Leyden, but another part with the Jesuits at Caen. Religious differences were overridden by the tendencies of business life and economic thought".

It is true, of course, that the English Nonconformists of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries revealed, like their Protestant counterparts at sundry times and in divers places, a remarkable capacity for trade. Max Weber, looking at the question from the continental point of view, informs² us that, "A glance at the occupational statistics of any country of mixed religious composition brings to light with remarkable frequency a situation which has several times provoked discussion in the Catholic press and literature, and

1. G.N. Clark, "The Later Stuarts" p.24.

2. "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" p.35.

in Catholic congresses in Germany, namely, the fact that business leaders and owners of capital, as well as the higher grades of skilled labour, and even more the higher technically and commercially trained personnel of modern enterprises, are overwhelmingly Protestant." In England, where the Anglicans and Nonconformists corresponded to this analysis, the reasons are not hard to find. The Army and Navy, the Universities, and the higher Civil Service were closed against Dissenters, so their ablest members were compelled to seek careers in that department of the national life which offered opportunity. Moreover, such careers, which promised them immediate returns, seemed specially desirable because, like modern Jews in many parts of the world, they had no lasting guarantee of civil rights and knew not what a moment would bring forth. Then, again, the Nonconformist was conspicuous among men for his honesty and zeal and, in the end, successful trade must rest on such foundations. The words of William Stout, a Quaker who conducted business as a grocer and ironmonger at Lancaster in the reign of Anne, display¹ the trading standards of the typical Dissenter: "I always detested that (which) is common; to ask more for goods than the market-price, or what they may be afforded for, but usually set the price at one word, which seemed offensive to many, who think they never buy cheap except they get abatement of the first price set upon them; and its common for the buyer to ask the

1. "Autobiography" p.22. (ed. J.Harland, 1851).

lowest price, which if answered they will still insist of abatement: to whom I answered they should not tempt any to break their words. And I observed that such plain-dealing obliged worthy customers and made business go forward with few words." Finally, we may conclude that the fundamental doctrines of Dissent impelled its members to pursue mundane vocations with a fervency of spirit little less than that accorded to the practice of their faith. The world and all it held was but a passing show and all its commerce but the market-place of Vanity. And yet, as Bunyan¹ saw, "The way to the Celestial City lies just through this town, where this lusty fair is kept; and he that will go to the City, and yet not go through this town, must needs go out of the world." Being, therefore, in the world yet not of it, the pilgrim on his journey should strive to honour God in that place where his lot was cast, and this could best be done by zealous application to the individual "calling". This task, indeed, was only second to the worship and the fear of God. Thus a certain Richard Steele, minister to a Dissenting congregation, declared² in 1684: "The Great Governour of the world hath appointed to every man his proper post and province, and let him be never so active out of his sphere, he will be at a great loss, if he do not keep his own vineyard and mind his own business." In the relatively spacious times that followed 1689, this practical injunction could more easily

1. "Pilgrim's Progress".

2. "The Tradesman's Calling, being a Discourse concerning the Nature, Necessity, Choice of a Calling in general". p.4 (1684).

be obeyed. The faith that had supported saints and martyrs in the flames of persecution became the driving power in worldly interests too.

The Dissenters had innumerable contacts with the poorer classes but their stability and permanence was founded everywhere on the craftsmen and smaller tradespeople. The conclusions formed by Richard Baxter at Kidderminster are illuminating here, and indicate the situation that prevailed throughout our period. "It was" he says¹, "a great Advantage to me, that my Neighbours were of such a Trade as allowed them time enough to read or talk of holy Things. For the Town liveth upon the Weaving of Kidderminster Stuffs; and as they stand in their Loom they can set a Book before them, or edifie one another: whereas Plowmen, and many others, are so wearied or continually employed, either in the Labours or the Cares of their Callings, that it is a great Impediment to their Salvation; Freeholders and Tradesmen are the Strength of Religion and Civility in the Land: and Gentlemen and Beggars, and Servile Tenants, are the Strength of Iniquity; (Though among these sorts there are some also that are good and just, as among the others there are many bad.) And their constant Converse and Traffick with London doth much promote Civility and Piety among Trades-men." Sometimes it would happen that a gifted artisan or merchant, while continuing his normal occupation, would serve as minister or pastor to a smaller congregation

1. "Reliquiae" (1696) p.89.

or devote himself to other forms of spiritual labour. Thomas Chubb, as we have seen, engaged in constant Deist speculation and remained throughout his life a tallow-chandler in the cathedral town of Salisbury. This convenient arrangement was general among the Quakers who doubted the necessity, if not the actual validity of a ministry set apart as such. Among the Baptists, also, the practice was familiar and welcome, their pastors not disdaining to adopt the methods which at times had served Saint Paul. "It is well said" Dr Whitley writes¹, "that the character of a denomination is to be estimated by its laymen; they are not only the great majority, but they show the kind of men to whom the ministers appeal. It is difficult to apply this test to this (1689) generation of Baptists, for every Baptist was a 'layman' in the sense of this maxim; it is not certain that a single one of the few ex-clergy was set apart from all secular employment and devoted himself entirely to pastoral work; it is certain that the great majority of Baptist ministers earned their own living. Of one hundred and forty General Baptist Elders who flourished in this period, we can trace the callings of forty: one was a gentleman of good estate, twelve were yeomen, three husbandmen, two labourers, three maltsters, one a thatcher, two blacksmiths; two woolcombers, one ^a weaver, one a fuller, one a tailor, one a shoemaker; one a bricklayer, one a carpenter, one a shipwright, one an ironmonger; a shop-keeper; a printer, a grocer, a baker, a

1. "History of British Baptists" p.152.

butcher, and a barber-surgeon complete the list." Many of these businesses, if small, were personal and independent and brought their Nonconformist owners into intimate and daily contact with the different types of people whom they served.

But, like the parabolic talent, worldly gifts when rightly used were favoured with increase. Thus, by 1689, we find that every branch of Nonconformity included members who no longer laboured with their own hands but had become employers on a larger scale or were engaging in the more abstract speculations of finance. In particular, the textile trades and the growing iron industry would seem to have attracted them. In the first of these, for instance, the Socinian Thomas Firmin had such good success that he could undertake expensive philanthropic ventures.¹ Equally successful in the same direction was a noted Baptist pastor, William Kiffin, who died in 1701. "He was" says² Lord Macaulay, "in the habit of exercising his spiritual gifts at their meetings; but he did not live by preaching. He traded largely: his credit on the Exchange of London stood high; and he had accumulated an ample fortune." In 1673, it is said, Charles II had approached him for a loan of forty thousand pounds. Remembering, doubtless, that the saint should join the wisdom of the serpent to the harmlessness of doves, Kiffin handed Charles a gift of ten thousand, and afterwards remarked that he had thereby secured a clear gain

1. See above, pp.135 and 176.

2. "History of England" 1 : 439 (1880).

of thirty thousand pounds. Still another Baptist, Thomas Hollis who died 12 September, 1718, was eminently prosperous in the clothing trade and left behind him a family who faithfully maintained his views in both commerce and religion. Among his many gifts to charity and learning may be mentioned the endowment of two Harvard professorships, one of which was Mathematics. His funeral sermon preached by Dr. Hunt at Pinners Hall, related¹ that "His charity was not confined to a party, though it might extend more to those who were of his own persuasion, being sincere, and thinking himself in the right. He denied himself, and lived frugal, that he might more extensively express his goodness. Various methods he took to be publicly useful; distributing books proper to encourage religion and virtue, promoting schools for instruction of the poor to read and write, and contributing to building of places of worship. He erected and founded two churches at Rotherham and Doncaster, and established schools at each place for teaching youth; communicating in his life to their maintenance, but bequeathing some encouragement after his decease." So, too, Sir Humphrey Edwyne, a Dissenter who "occasionally" conformed, and son-in-law of Samuel Sambrooke, himself an influential City merchant, became a leading member of the woollen trade and rose, as we have seen before, to be Lord Mayor of London in William's reign. Edmund Calamy, a Presbyterian, was related by his marriage to substantial trading people. He

1. Ivimey, "History of Baptists" iii : 388.

thus describes¹ the circumstances: "In the latter end of this year, (19 December, 1695), I married Mrs. Mary Watts, daughter to Mr. Michael Watts, who dealt in Yorkshire clothes and kerseys, and had as good a reputation as most tradesmen in the city." In the iron industry the story is a similar one. Thomas Newcomen (1663-1729) who, in 1705, with Savery and Cawley invented the atmospheric steam-engine, was pastor of the Baptist Church at Dartmouth. Mordecai Abbot, a Baptist layman who became Receiver-General of Customs under William III, was a prosperous iron-master and employer of labour, whilst Abraham Darby established what has been described as a Quaker dynasty in the same field. Sir Thomas Abney, an Independent who sheltered and befriended Isaac Watts, attained considerable importance in national commerce and finance before his death in 1722. On his marriage license, dated 24 August, 1668, he is described as "of All Hallows in the Wall, London, citizen and fishmonger," but the charter granted to the Bank of England on 27 July, 1694, which gives his name as one of the original directors is perhaps a better index of his wealth and influence. Such cases might be multiplied indefinitely from the records of the time, but enough has now been said to show that Nonconformists were becoming an important element in the world of English trade. Indeed, by 1698 Charles Leslie had observed the manifest prosperity of Whitehead's meeting-house and cast² it at the Quaker as a matter for reproach: "Thy

1. "Life and Times" i : 365.

2. Leslie "The Snake in the Grass" (1698) p.362.

Church in Grace-Church-Street, are of the Richest Trading Men in London: And many of them such."

The native Nonconformist genius for trade was curiously strengthened at this time by Protestant refugees who came in very large numbers from France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and from the Palatinate after 1709. Opinion is agreed once more that these refugees represented the most industrious and highly skilled working classes in Europe, and it is certain that they left a deep and lasting mark on English trade. They found a home in many English towns such as Norwich, Yarmouth, Birmingham, Canterbury and Bideford, but most of all in London where, at one time it was reckoned there were over thirty French Protestant churches. Their activities are thus described¹ by Lecky, the historian: "Cloth makers from Antwerp and Bruges, lace makers from Valenciennes, cambric makers from Cambray, glass makers from Paris, stuff weavers from Meaux, potters from Delft, shipwrights from Havre and Dieppe, silk manufacturers from Bordeaux and Auvergne, woollen manufacturers from Sedan, and tanners from the Touraine, were all plying their industries in England. The manufactures of silk, damask, velvet, cambric and baize, of the finer kinds of cloth and paper, of pendulum clocks, mathematical instruments, felt hats, toys, crystal and plate glass, all owe their origin in England wholly or chiefly to Protestant refugees, who also laid the foundation of scientific gardening, introduced numerous

1. Lecky. "Hist. of England in the Eighteenth Century"
1 : 239.

flowers and vegetables that had before been unknown, and improved almost every industry that was indigenous to the soil." It must not be imagined, all the same, that these foreign refugees were absorbed into English business life without frequent local and even national misgiving. The Naturalization Bill, for example, which had been comparatively easy to secure in the winter session of 1708 was never popular in High Church circles and was, in fact, repealed in 1712 when the Whigs were out of power, but in the calmer days which followed the accession of George I the refugees were left to follow their vocations undisturbed and quickly merged into the general course of English trade. The important thing, however, is that for many years to come their natural alignment in both politics and faith was with the Nonconformists.

There was, of course, a minority of ignorant or disappointed persons who stubbornly refused to see the benefits of wider trade. As late as 1716, for example, the "Freeholder" gave¹ an entertaining picture of a local squire's reactions to the Whig world in which he lived, and in particular to the foreign trade which it encouraged. "That I may give my readers" so the paper ran, "an image of these rural statesmen, I shall, without further preface, set down an account of a discourse I chanced to have with one of them some time ago. - - - After supper, he asked me, if I was an admirer of punch; and immediately called for a sneaker. I

1. Addison "The Freeholder" No.22. (5 March, 1716).

took this occasion to insinuate the advantages of trade, by observing to him, that water was the only native of England that could be made use of on this occasion: But that the lemons, the brandy, the sugar, and the nutmeg, were all foreigners. This put him into some confusion; but the landlord, who overheard me, brought him off, by affirming, that for constant use there was no liquor like a cup of English water, provided it had malt enough in it. My squire laughed heartily at the conceit, and made the landlord sit down with us." It is, however, only fair to say that a wiser state of mind is reflected in a pamphlet which appeared in 1722. The author says¹ that "Now the greatest gentlemen affect to make their junior sons Turkey merchants, and while the diligent son is getting an estate by foreign traffic, the wise father at home employs his talent in railing at foreigners." The outlook of Dean Swift was naturally different from and yet curiously near to that of the benighted squires. He denounces² the false politics of men who "take it into their imagination, that trade can never flourish unless the country becomes a common receptacle for all nations, religions and languages; a system only proper for small popular States." But the very frequency and bitterness with which the enemies of Toleration connected it with trade suggests a fairly general belief that penal laws and statutes were impediments

1. "The Danger of the Church & Kingdom from Foreigners Considered" ix : 132 (Southerden Burns, "Hist. of Prot. Refugees" p.13).
2. Swift. "The Examiner" No.22. "Prose Works" ed. Temple Scott.

to economic progress; and, in fact, this was the case. For twenty years before the Revolution men like Sir William Temple and Sir Josiah Child had been pointing to the prosperous state of Holland where religious liberty had been secured. Their words were echoed by Sir William Petty in 1690 and the moral they implied became a part of liberal thought in England. A pamphlet like Defoe's "Enquiry", provoked by the attempt to pass the Occasional Conformity Bill, throws light upon this wider and extremely practical aspect of the long struggle against religious disabilities. "We wonder, gentlemen," he says¹, "you will accept our money on your deficient funds, our stocks to help carry on your wars, our loans and credits to your victualling office and navy office. If you would go on to distinguish us, get a law made we shall buy no lands, that we may not be freeholders, and see if you could find money to buy us out. Transplant us into towns and bodie, and let us trade by ourselves, let us card, spin, knit, and work with and for one another, and see how you will maintain your own poor without us. Let us freight our ships apart, keep our money out of your bank, accept none of our bills, and separate yourselves as absolutely from us in civil matters as we do from you in religious, and see how you can go on without us. If you are not willing to do this, but we must live among you, trade, work, receive and pay together, why may we not do it in peace, with love and unity, without daily reproach? If we have any knaves among us, take them; if

1. Defoe "Enquiry into Occasional Conformity",
(Trevelyan, p.48.).

we have any hypocrites, any who can conform and do not, we are free to part with them, that the remainder may be all such as agree with the character here given; and when you have garbled us to your heart's desire and ours, you need never fear your church as to her politic interest in the world; pray, then, let us be quiet." The course of politics throughout these years was, in fact, increasingly determined by commercial and financial interests, and any measure that was calculated to promote them was by far the strongest argument with Robert Walpole and his friends.

It was, of course, inevitable that the commercial interests of the Nonconformists should bring them into close and frequent contact with public affairs, and this, as we shall try to show, was of supreme importance for religious freedom. In turning, therefore, to this aspect of the matter we may notice, first of all, their connections with the several occupants of the throne for, as Mr Churchill says¹, "at the beginning of the eighteenth century the Crown was still the prime factor in actual politics;" and, secondly we may follow their relations with the various statesmen who shaped the course of party politics in the wider field of Parliament.

As to the reigning Sovereigns of the time, the first of them was William, Prince of Orange, bred in Holland and of Presbyterian sympathies. The Nonconformists looked on his accession with exalted hopes, and he and Mary "were no sooner

1. "Marlborough His Life and Times" iii : 25.

seated on the throne, than Dissenting Ministers of the three denominations, in and about the cities of London and Westminster, waited on their Majesties with an address of congratulation¹". This address, which Dr. Bates delivered to the King, was typical of such occasions and yet, perhaps, more than usually significant when the situation as a whole is borne in mind. After the usual passages of pious adulation Dr. Bates proceeded thus: "We owe to your Majesty the two greatest and most valuable blessings that we can enjoy; - the preservation of the true religion, our most sacred treasure, - and the recovery of the falling state, and the establishing of it upon just foundations. According to our duty, we promise unfeigned fidelity and true allegiance to your Majesty's person and government. We are encouraged - - humbly to desire and hope, that your Majesty will be pleased by your wisdom and authority to establish a firm union of your protestant subjects in matters of religion, by making the rule of Christianity to be the rule of conformity. - - We do assure your Majesty that we shall cordially embrace the terms of union which the ruling wisdom of our Saviour has prescribed in his word." These words like those of William in reply, reveal the lively hopes entertained at this time by many Churchmen and Dissenters of securing national "comprehension". "I take kindly your good wishes" said the king, "and whatever is in my power shall be employed for obtaining such a union among you. I do assure

1. Ivimey "History of the English Baptists" iii : 19.

you of my protection and kindness." The hopes of comprehension were doomed to bitter disappointment but at the time the deputation went away content with William's cordial and sincere reply. In the following years the king had ample proof of their continued loyalty and in 1696 when an attempt upon his life had been successfully defeated their warm allegiance was again expressed in numerous addresses. On 9 April of that year the Baptist, Joseph Stennett, assured¹ the king on behalf of his colleagues: "We gladly embrace this occasion to assure your Majesty, that as we have enjoyed a share of the benign influences of your government, whereby both our civil and religious liberties have been so happily preserved and vindicated; so we shall make it our glory (as we account it our duty) to render your Majesty the utmost service we are capable of, in that sphere wherein the law allows us to move." A certain anxious dread may be discerned in most of these addresses, but there is little doubt that William honoured in both word and deed the assurances of protection given the Dissenters in 1689. He made it clear, for example, that the various attempts of Tory churchmen to persecute Dissenting academies, aroused his deep resentment. Burnet the historian, and others who knew him intimately, are unanimous that, like the Cambridge Platonists, he was "much for liberty of conscience" and suggest that he would gladly have relieved Dissenters from all disabling laws. He was at all times on friendly and even cordial terms with

1. Ivimey. op. cit. iii : 25.

Nonconformist ministers and laymen and their sorrow at his death went very much deeper than the fashionable grief which usually follows the passing of a king. "Yet, blessed be God," declared¹ John Piggott at the time, "we have some good hope, that his thoughts will not so vanish with his breath, but that his excellent model, made from axioms calculated for the honour and interest of Europe, will be preserved by his illustrious successor to the throne; who has already given the utmost assurance to make good all the alliances into which his late Majesty entered with foreign princes, and to defend our religion and liberties. Indeed this is a mighty relief under our unspeakable loss; a loss we must needs deplore."

The relief was not of long duration. King William died on 8 March, 1702, and ten days later the ministers of the Three Denominations, this time led by Dr. Daniel Williams, were presented to the new Queen. After paying faithful tribute to the late King's memory and acknowledgement of his successor's lawful title to the throne, Dr. Williams thus went² on: "We further beg leave to assure your Majesty of our most dutiful affection and inviolable fidelity to your royal person and government; not doubting of our share in the many blessings of your Majesty's wise and happy reign, which we heartily pray may

1. "The natural frailty of princes consider'd, in a Sermon, 29th of March, 1702, - - upon the death of the late - - - King of England."

2. Printed in Ivimey's "English Baptists" iii : 39.

be long over us." At the end of this address the "cloudy apprehensions" which Edmund Calamy had noted¹ in his Nonconformist friends became suddenly more concrete. The answer made by William on a similar occasion had been short, but Queen Anne's was shorter still. Her Gracious Majesty made no reply at all and the embarrassed deputation had to take their leave with what dignity they could. In the early years of her reign, however, the Queen maintained an outward courtesy towards Dissenters and when they dutifully came with complimentary addresses after several famous victories achieved by Marlborough in the French War, they were received with greater warmth. But by 1710 it was abundantly clear that they had little real favour in her sight. The Occasional Conformity Bill and the Schism Bill which followed it were entirely to her mind. In the stormy days which saw the drafting of the latter measure by the Tory High Church party, the Dissenters made one last appeal to royal favour. They published an octavo pamphlet² of thirty-nine pages in which they begged the Queen to exercise her prerogative by withholding her assent from the infamous proposals. Their entreaties were without avail and the Schism Bill received her signature on 14 June, 1714. It is hardly, therefore, to be wondered at if Dissenters looked on her decease which prevented any operation of the Act, as

1. "Life and Times" i : 460.

2. "To the Queen. The humble Supplication of certain of her Majesty's faithful and peaceable Subjects, called Protestant Dissenters - - - in relation to the Bill to prevent Schism." 1714.

an intervention of Providence and an answer to their prayers. It was clear at once that the friendly relations between the Dissenters and the throne, which the reign of Anne had interrupted, were to be renewed by George I. At his first Privy Council held on 22 September, 1714, he announced¹: "I take this occasion also to express to you, my firm purpose to do all that is in my power, for supporting and maintaining the Churches of England and Scotland, as they are severally by law established; which I am of opinion may be effectually done without the least impairing the toleration, allowed by law to Protestant Dissenters, so agreeable to Christian charity, and so necessary to the trade and riches of the kingdom." Again, a few days later, on 2 October, he replied in similar vein to Dr. Williams who had expressed the usual Nonconformist loyalty: "I am very well pleased with your expressions of duty to me, and you may depend upon having my protection." In the following year the Jacobites provided the Nonconformists with an unusual opportunity of proving the sincerity of their professions. A certain Thomas Sabourn, it appears², was "chiefly instrumental in raising for the service of his Majesty and Government about six or seven hundred Protestant dissenters in one day at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, at the time of the late most unnatural Rebellion in Northumberland, when the rebels were within a few miles of Newcastle." These

1. This, and the following quotation are both printed in Ivimey. *op. cit.* iii : 115.
2. Calender of Treasury Papers 1714-19 (Redington) pp.475-6.

and others like them showed a zeal toward the House of Hanover not less than that which their spiritual fathers had manifested in the "good old cause." Their attachment to the King's interest led, in fact, to many of their meeting-houses being destroyed, but they felt secure enough to ask for compensation in an address presented to his Majesty when the rising had been safely crushed. Nathaniel Hodges did not fail to tell the King that it had been the very loyalty of Nonconformists which had brought this violence on their people and ended the address with an appeal for liberty of worship and protection. The reply was friendly and, no doubt, sincere. "I am very much concerned" said¹ George, "at the unchristian and barbarous treatment which those of your persuasion have met with in several parts of my kingdom; and care shall be taken that a full compensation shall be made for their sufferings. I thank you for this address, and you may be assured of my protection." But the real nature of this welcome advent into royal favour may best be seen in the incident of the Regium Donum. This, as we have seen, was a gift of money made by the King to help, in the first instance, the widows of Dissenting ministers. His desire to ease the sufferings of his Nonconformist subjects was accompanied by an equally deep desire for their support in his endeavour to secure his throne. Edmund Calamy was given audience of the King about the time in 1721 when Townshend and Walpole were discussing

1. Ivimey, op. cit. iii : 123.

the proposed munificence. "His Majesty was pleased to tell me" he naively writes¹, "he took us Dissenters for his hearty friends, and desired me to let my brethren in the city know, that in the approaching election of members of Parliament, he depended on them, to use their utmost influence wherever they had any interest, in favour of such as were hearty for him and his family." On the whole, then, we may fairly judge that this new friendship well repaid Sovereigns and Dissenters alike. The allegiance of the latter both to William III and George I was amply justified and we need not doubt that in either case the royal influence did much to strengthen the position of Dissent even if it stopped short of positive enactments.

As to the way in which purely political interests affected Toleration we can scarce avoid returning on our tracks, for much in this connection has been mentioned incidentally before. A deep-set cleavage in the social life of England had been sharply emphasised in 1688 when the two great parties in the State adopted much of the particular characters they were to bear for many years to come. The Tory party was composed of country squires, of the lesser clergy and other supporters of the Church of England, and of some at least of those who wanted to restore the Stuart kings. The Whigs were mainly drawn from the trading and commercial classes whose interests centred chiefly in the towns, with certain members of aristocratic families and the

1. "Life and Times" ii : 446.

Anglican episcopate. The situation of Dissenters inclined them naturally to the Whig party whose policy with regard to the Protestant Succession, the War with France, and the projected Union of the Parliaments was all that Nonconformists could desire; and since the Whigs were to remain in power for several generations the long association thus begun at least maintained, if it did not much enlarge, the degree of Toleration which had already been secured.

Like all such unions, that of Whigs and Nonconformists had both good and evil consequences for both contracting parties. While each enjoyed the welfare and prosperity of the other, each also shared the hatred and abuse into which its partner sometimes fell. But that the union was a deep and lasting one there is abundant evidence to show. In the early years of William's reign the Whigs and Nonconformists were invariably connected and the very bitterness with which High Churchmen and Tories attacked and vilified them both is ample proof that their association was a potent factor in the reign of Anne. "I remember" wrote¹ Jonathan Swift on 15 February, 1711, "to have asked some considerable Whigs, whether it did not bring a disreputation upon their body, to have the whole herd of Presbyterians, Independents, Atheists, Anabaptists, Deists, Quakers and Socinians, openly and universally listed under their banners? They answered, that all this was absolutely necessary, in order to make a balance against the Tories." Two months later he declared²

1. "The Examiner" No. 30. "Prose Works" ed. Temple Scott, ix : 190.
2. Ibid. No. 40. (26 April, 1711). ix : 259.

again, "I look upon the Whigs and Dissenters to be exactly of the same political faith." We have elsewhere noted¹ how a pamphleteer in 1713 takes the alignment for granted and tries in vain to drive a wedge between the two. The Tory Squire of early Georgian days is undecided whether Whig or Nonconformist is more pestilential in the land. But the convenient arrangement outlived both squire and pamphleteer, and was the real inspiration of these perennial Bills of Indemnity which from 1727 afforded the Dissenters some immunity at law for infringements of the Test and Corporation Acts.

Throughout these years the Whigs pursued a fairly even policy of which the general nature may be seen in several questions of more than usual interest that emerged. They were, for instance, set upon the active prosecution of the French War. In this they were encouraged by William III whose major interest over many years was to reduce the power of Louis XIV. The Tories, on the other hand, with certain notable exceptions, were hostile to the whole campaign and this, in fact, led Marlborough to leave his party in the end and seek new friends among the Whigs. But any opposition on a matter such as this was serious, and thus the leaders of the War party were at greater pains to conciliate the Dissenters. This was not hard to do because, of course, they sympathised completely with a war which was ultimately waged against the avowed champion of Roman Catholicism. It

1. "Letter to the Dissenters" (1713) pp.10-11.

was said that even Quakers voted for the War. So, too, with the proposal to unite the Parliaments in 1707. Much of the High Tory opposition to the scheme arose from the fact that Presbyterianism had been established north of the Border. "The Rehearsal", for example said in 1705 that the Town Council of Edinburgh had caused an effigy of the Saviour to be burned in public and, a few years later "The Observer" described¹ the Scots as follows: "The people are proud, arrogant, vainglorious, bloody, barbarous and inhuman butchers. Couzenance and theft is in perfection among them. Their Church services are 'blasphemy' as I blush to mention." As against this many Nonconformists such as Edmund Calamy had much in common with the Scottish Kirk and saw in the united Parliament a strengthening of their interest. Finally, the Whigs were solid for the Protestant Succession and this, as we have seen already, was regarded as almost vital to their existence by every Nonconformist and kept them loyal to their party faith through several disappointments and humiliations. The Whigs came, in fact, to rely as much on the support of the Dissenters as the Tories on that of Churchmen. "In self-protection against an unfriendly world", it has been truly said², "the Protestant Dissenters sought refuge as clients of the Whig aristocracy. They did not come empty-handed, for they could offer their patrons good value at election time. They were many of them of the rank of

1. Trevelyan "Ramillies" p.176n.

2. Trevelyan "Blenheim" p.191.

society likely to have votes as forty-shilling freeholders in the counties, or as possessors of one or other of the numerous varieties of fancy franchise in the boroughs. Although they formed perhaps a twentieth part of the nation in numbers, they possessed much more than a twentieth part of its wealth and voting power." A few outstanding names will serve to indicate the value of Dissenting help in politics. The wealthy Baptist, William Kiffen, was an Alderman of Cheap before 1689 and was succeeded in that office by Sir Humphrey Edwyn. Sir Humphrey had already been appointed Sheriff of Glamorgan where he had extensive property, and of London and Middlesex where his trading interests lay. As Lord Mayor of London from 1697 he exercised considerable influence on contemporary affairs. Sir Thomas Abney was also Sheriff of London and Middlesex in William's reign, and became Lord Mayor in 1700 and Whig member for the City in 1702. In less exalted places Nonconformists, who possessed a local government vote, were active in returning Whigs to borough councils, and these in turn were frequently successful in electing one of their own party men to the local seat in Parliament. The importance of these indirect political activities was fully realized by Tories and High Churchmen. As the "Freeholder" accompanied his squire through a country town in 1715 the latter gave¹ descriptions of the people whom they met: "One was a dog, another a whelp, another a cur, and another the son of a

1. Addison "Freeholder" No.22. (5 Mar. 1716).

bitch, under which several denominations were comprehended all that voted on the Whig side in the last election of burgesses." This horrid language may be taken as a fair reflection of the sentiments which Georgian Tories and High Churchmen, felt justified in entertaining for Whigs and Nonconformists.

The Dissenters, then, "followed the Russells, Cavendishes and Whartons all the more faithfully because they themselves were not of social rank to aspire to seats in either House of Parliament, were rigidly excluded from the Universities, and were prevented by the Test Act from taking any considerable part even in local administration¹." In return for this allegiance they looked, beyond all else, for liberty of worship and protection for their lives and property. As these had been secured by the Act of 1689 the Whigs could meet their needs by steadfastly adhering to the Revolution settlement. As time went on, however, the Dissenters naturally sought to be relieved from the civil disabilities which the Toleration Act had modified but not removed, and this, of course, necessitated further legislation. The gratitude of the Whigs might thus be shown in two ways; they might maintain the liberties of 1689 or they might go beyond them and increase their scope by new enactments. Their duty in the first direction was faithfully discharged; in the second it was cautious and conditioned in a most unworthy way.

The existing settlement was not seriously challenged

1. Trevelyan "Blenheim" p.190.

until Anne began to reign when the various Bills for preventing Occasional Conformity began to come before successive Parliaments. The course of this deplorable affair as it affected Nonconformists has already been examined in an earlier chapter, and here it will suffice to note the general attitude adopted by the Whigs throughout the controversy. The first attempt to pass the Bill was easily defeated. A leading part in the debates was taken by Wharton and Burnet who were cordially supported by Somers and Archbishop Tenison. The Queen at first approved the Bill and when it was read a second time in the House of Lords on 14 December, 1702¹, her "ardour can be measured from the fact that she compelled her husband, whom the Bill would have disqualified from public life, to vote for it. But as he filed into the Aye lobby the poor Prince, who suffered many vexations in his comfortable life, was heard to exclaim to the Whig teller, Wharton, of whom Queen Anne so sternly disapproved, 'My heart is wid you'." Harley and some others tried to steer a middle course between the Whigs and Tories, and though Marlborough and Godolphin voted for the measure it was with serious misgivings as to what effects its passing might have upon the conduct of the War. The former also had misgivings of another kind for his forceful helpmeet, Sarah, was an ardent Whig and entirely out of sympathy with the proposals of the Bill. A letter from her husband at this time anticipates his own later change of outlook on the

1. Winston S. Churchill "Marlborough" ii : 182.

matter. "As you" he assures¹ her, "are the only body that could have given me happiness, I am the more concerned we should differ so much in opinions, but as I am firmly resolved never to assist any Jacobite whatsoever, or any Tory that is for persecution, I must be careful not to do the thing in the World which my Lord Rochester would most desire to have me do; which is to give my Vote against this bill.

- - By what has been told me, the bill will certainly be thrown out unless my Lord Treasurer and I will both speak to people, and speak in the House, which I do assure you for myself I will not do." Until 1711 each successive effort to carry the Bill was foiled, the Whigs opposing all attempts to alter the arrangements made in 1689. But in that year they had to choose between desertion of their former friends or losing Nottingham's support in their attempt to overthrow the Tory peace proposals. They chose the former course, and thus the Occasional Conformity Bill became law. Three years later they were powerless to prevent the still more drastic Schism Bill whose operations were so strangely set at nought by the timely death of Anne. "When this bill" we are told², "was engrossed and read the third time in order to be passed, there arose a long and warm debate. Mr. Hampden, Mr. Robert Walpole, general Stanhope, Mr. Lechmere, sir Joseph Jekyll, and sir Peter King, exerted their eloquence in opposing it, representing in general, 'That it looked more like a decree of Julian the apostate, than a law enacted by a Protestant

1. Quoted in full by Churchill, op. cit. ii : 181.

2. Cobbett "Parliamentary History" vi : 1349-50.

parliament, since it tended to raise as great a persecution against our Protestant brethren, as either the primitive christians ever suffered from the heathen emperors, or the Protestants from Popery and the inquisition'. Mr. Stanhope showed, in particular, the ill consequences of this law, as it would of course occasion foreign education; which, on the one hand, would drain the kingdom of great sums of money; and, which was still worse, fill the tender minds of young men with prejudices against their own country."

On the death of Anne the true development of English constitutional life was once again resumed, but something more than mere defence was needed to assist Dissenters now. Accordingly, in 1717, Stanhope, in the face of many doubts and considerable opposition, discussed with Sunderland and Cowper the possibilities of repealing all the penal laws that stood against them. The Lord Chancellor Cowper had but little zeal for the proposal and Sunderland, remembering Sacheverell and the "Church in danger" cry, was averse to any interference with the Test and Corporation Acts. So the matter rested for another year, but meantime certain changes had occurred. Professor Williams thus describes¹ the subsequent events: "By the winter session of 1718 Stanhope was in a more favourable position. The lukewarm Chancellor had resigned in April, the Quadruple Alliance had been signed, the Spanish fleet had been annihilated by Byng, and the ministry seemed firmly established. Accordingly on 13

1. "Stanhope" p.391.

December he introduced into the house of Lords his Bill to which he attached the captivating title 'for strengthening the Protestant interest'. The measure - - not only provided for the repeal of the Occasional Conformity Act as well as the Schism Act, but even proposed to release Protestant Dissenters, in case the incumbent made a difficulty, from the obligation of taking the Sacrament at all in an Established Church on assuming office: in other words, without formally repealing them - a concession to Sunderland's scruples - the measure would have made a breach in the Test and Corporation Acts, then and for over a century longer regarded as the main bulwark of England's happy Establishment." Before the Repeal Bill had passed through all its stages, however, this indirect attempt to nullify the Test had disappeared and in the end it merely placed Dissenters where they had been in 1689. But Stanhope quickly followed the Repeal with "An Act for Quieting and Establishing Corporations", (1718), whereby any person serving on local corporations who had not been arraigned within six months for failure to observe the sacramental requirements, might thereafter hold his office undisturbed for life. Thus when Walpole introduced his first Indemnity Bill in 1727 he was but building on foundations which had already been laid. The growing unity among the Nonconformists, and the general spirit of the time had changed his first hostility to Stanhope's measure for repealing the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts into a desire for Toleration. But while Stanhope acted from consistent motives Walpole was content

with the expedient minimum, and so, while annual Acts "for indemnifying Persons, who have omitted to qualify themselves for Offices and Employments within the Time limited by Law" became a feature of Parliamentary routine, the Test and Corporation Acts had yet to stay another hundred years.

Such, then in brief, was the influence of politics on religious freedom, but our satisfaction as we scan those years is not unmingled with regret. On the whole, however, we can trace a sure, if slow, enlargement of the spirit of Toleration. The historian may sometimes feel that a more decisive effort might easily have been made to remove the blemish of the penal laws from English legislation; but he may also judge that, in the end, the partial effort actually made was conclusive in their modification.

II. JOHN LOCKE on Toleration.

It is difficult to say whether great and widespread movements in the world of thought more frequently produce the prophet who expounds them or are themselves conceived and carried out by the genius of an individual mind. At most great turning points in history a master voice has spoken to indicate the new directions that the steps of men have surely had to follow. It is not unlikely that the change so long impending in the national life,

Under the sure, unhasting, steady stress
Of Reason's movement,

which culminated in the English Revolution of 1688, would soon or late have reached its goal even if John Locke had

never been; but it is certain that he saw more clearly than any of his fellows the inner meaning of the change and that he furnished for his age the very scriptures of enlightened progress. A fundamental question in the general reshaping of contemporary life was the place of small minorities in a modern corporate State. To this particular problem John Locke applied his matchless logic in the "Letters on Toleration" which still remain the classics of the subject. No doubt a multitude of lesser minds, the Robert Filmers and the Jonas Proasts, were actively engaged upon the self-same theme, but if ever one man's writings can be said effectually to have established a great social principle, they were those of Locke upon religious freedom. The native majesty and calm wherein his work is clothed, no less than the applause of all succeeding generations, compel us to approach with reverence, as those who tread on holy ground, while the frequency with which his doctrines have been stated and expounded precludes the need for anything but the barest outline here. Indeed, the simplest way to understand the views of Locke is for each to read the "Letters" for himself.

His treatment of the question was undoubtedly affected by the environment in which, throughout his life, he regularly moved, and by the special nature of his individual genius. As to the first, he was born in Somersetshire on 29 August, 1632, of John Locke, a lawyer, and Agnes Keene, his wife. A letter sent by Lady Masham to Le Clerc in 1704 contains some stray remarks that Locke had made to her about

his mother. She was, apparently, a deeply pious woman, but her influence was ended by an early death. "It may be assumed" Fox Bourne observes¹, "that she died before her husband made his will in 1660, as she is not named therein." This loss accounts in some degree for the warm affection and esteem that Locke at all times showed toward his father; and it is surely not without significance that the latter served as Captain of a troop of horse in the Parliamentary interest during the Civil War. Moreover, the events which called this country lawyer to the active profession of arms caused other changes too. Thus when Locke went up to Christ Church from Westminster School in 1652 he found the Puritan John Owen had already been appointed Dean and was shortly to become Vice-Chancellor of the University; and one can hardly fail to conclude that some of Locke's opinions on the nature of the Church, which are essential to his argument on Toleration, were confirmed, if not actually inspired, by the distinguished Independent teacher. On leaving Oxford in 1667 Locke repaired to London and became a member of Ashley's household. The sympathies of Ashley and his friends were entirely with the Nonconformists and, in point of fact, it was this new association which brought Locke into serious disfavour with the Court. Accordingly, he felt it wise in 1683 to seek a home in Holland and again it is significant that in the country of his exile where he stayed till 1689, religious freedom had already been established. As to the

1. "Life of John Locke" i : 13.

other factor, there is little doubt that the rare personal genius of Locke had marked him out among his fellows from a very early age. His outlook was essentially empirical, forsaking a priori methods for the steady pathways of inductive thought. This cast of mind unfitted him for much that Oxford had to give in 1652. "What, indeed," enquires¹ Lord King, "could the false philosophy of the schools, and their vain disputation, profit the man who was afterwards to be distinguished above all other men, for his devoted love of truth, of unshackled inquiry, and of philosophy." But the temper had its value in sending him to other authors than the schools prescribed. At Oxford, there is little doubt, he learned beside the usual subjects some of Owen's views upon the nature of the church which are fundamental to his later theory of Toleration; but for such as Locke the world of thought transcends the bounds of class and creed and truth comes home by various channels. The full extent of what he owed to Chillingworth and Taylor may well remain a matter of dispute but that they influenced him profoundly in this respect must be very clear to all. Nor was a man like Locke unlikely to ignore the work of lesser men, the "Liberty of Conscience the Magistrate's interest", for example, which Sir Charles Wolsely wrote in 1668. But whatever came to Locke was altered and transformed by his rare personal genius. The combination of the scientific outlook with the influences of early life and later environment made his handling of

1. "Life of Locke" p.3.

Religious Toleration refreshingly practical and new. With a wider grasp of real values than was usual at the time, and with acute perception and unfailing logic he exposed the folly and injustices of the various attempts to enforce conformity in England. This was the real object that engaged his mind for many years and the real purpose that produced his "Letters".

Some earlier unpublished fragments equally reveal his point of view. The following, for instance, was set down¹ in 1683: "If it be said, as it is, 'we have the law on our side, our constitution is established by the law of the land, you ought to be of our Church because the civil magistrate commands it', I know not how short a cut this may be to peace, or rather uniformity, but I am sure it is a great way about, if not quite out of the way, to truth; for if the civil magistrates have the power to institute religions and force men to such ways of worship they shall think fit to enact, I desire any one, after a survey of the present potentates of the earth, to tell me how it is like to fare with truth and religion, if none be to appear and be owned in the world but what we receive out of the courts of Princes, or senate-houses of the states that govern it - - And if Princes and potentates are not like for the future to be better informed, or more in love with true religion than they have been heretofore, if they are not like to be more sincerely concerned for the salvation of their people's souls

1. "Defence of Nonconformity". Printed in Lord King's "Life of Locke" p.343.

than every man himself is for his own, I do not see what reason we have to expect that these laws should be the likeliest way to support and propagate the truth, and make subjects of the kingdom of heaven for the future." Yet it was precisely on such grounds, however scandalous and even ludicrous they might have been, that the most embittered persecutions had been founded. It was the task of Locke to bring reason and common sense to bear on English church life.

It was in Amsterdam, where Locke had fled for safety from the Stuart kings, that "Epistola de Tolerantia" was composed in Latin for his friend Limborch in the winter months of 1685. Limborch, apparently without the author's knowledge, published it at Gouda, in Holland, during the spring of 1689. It was at once translated into Dutch and French, and in the autumn, when the Toleration Act had safely passed into law, a certain William Popple, a Socinian merchant resident in London, produced the first English version as "A Letter concerning Toleration". In April, 1690, there appeared at Oxford, from the pen of Jonas Proast, "The Argument of the Letter concerning Toleration, Briefly Consider'd and Answer'd". An immediate reply was made by Locke, who used the name Philanthropus, in "A Second Letter concerning Toleration". A further criticism soon appeared from Proast entitled "A Third Letter concerning Toleration", and, to answer this, Philanthropus produced, in 1692, "A Third Letter for Toleration". Twelve years later, in 1704, Proast returned to the attack with "A Second Letter to the Author of the Three Letters for Toleration", but "A Fourth

Letter for Toleration", designed to answer his contentions, was left unfinished, for Locke died in 1706, acknowledging his authorship of the series for the first time definitely in the codicil to his will. The Second, Third and Fourth Letters do little more than amplify and emphasise the arguments expounded in the First; and it is here that we must chiefly seek what is commonly called his "Theory of Toleration."

In turning to the "Letters" we may notice, first of all, how strongly Locke insists that civil government and ecclesiastical authority have each their separate sphere beyond which they may not justly go. "The heads and leaders of the church", he writes¹, "moved by avarice and insatiable desire of domination, making use of the immoderate ambition of magistrates, and the credulous superstition of the giddy multitude, have incensed and animated them against those that dissent from themselves; by preaching unto them, contrary to the laws of the Gospel, and to the precepts of charity, that schismatics and heretics are to be outed of their possessions, and destroyed. And thus have they mixed together, and confounded two things that are in themselves most different, the church and the commonwealth.-- If each of them would contain itself within its own bounds, the one attending to the worldly welfare of the commonwealth, the other to the salvation of souls, it is impossible that any discord should ever have happened between them." There is

1. "Letters on Toleration" p.36. (Alexander Murray's Reprint, London 1870).

little doubt that this particular doctrine was in general agreement with the prevailing English temper after 1689 and proved, so far as it was really acted on, a valuable expedient; but whether it could be maintained in an absolute sense, or applied in every circumstance, it is difficult indeed to say. The things of God and those of Ceasar have always been notoriously hard both to separate and to reconcile and the tension which so commonly exists between their claims is not entirely absent from the writings of John Locke himself. He had, in fact, two different points of view; he was at once the rationalist political philosopher and the professing Christian in whose faith some shreds of old traditions still remained.

His interest in political philosophy impels him to survey the rights and duties of the magistrate who rules the civil state. To this he had already applied himself in 1667, though "An Essay concerning Toleration" then composed remained unpublished¹ until very recent times. "I shall lay down this for a foundation," he writes², "which I think will not be questioned or denied, viz:- that the whole trust, power, and authority of the magistrate is vested in him for no other purpose but to be made use of for the good, preservation and peace of men in that society over which he is set, and therefore that this alone is and ought to be the standard and measure according to which he ought to square and proportion

1. It was first published in Fox Bourne's "Life of John Locke" i : 174 - 194.

2. Fox Bourne op. cit. i : 174 - 5.

his laws, model and frame his government. For, if men could live peaceably and quietly together, without uniting under certain laws, and grow into a commonwealth, there would be no need at all of magistrates or politics, which were only made to preserve men in this world from the fraud and violence of one another; so that what was the end of erecting of government ought alone to be the measure of its proceeding.--- The magistrate ought to do or meddle with nothing but barely in order to securing the civil peace and property of his subjects." From this he argues that purely speculative opinions and worship, "practical principles or opinions by which men think themselves obliged to regulate their actions to one another", and such private virtues and vices as are not clearly subversive of peace and order, are entirely outside the jurisdiction of the magistrate. Eighteen years later this foundation principle was substantially repeated in "Epistola de Tolerantia" and, subsequently, in the various translations of the work. In the English version of 1689 he says¹, "The commonwealth seems to me to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, the preserving, and the advancing their own civil interests. Civil interests I call life, liberty, health and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like. It is the duty of the civil magistrate, by the impartial execution of equal laws, to secure unto all the people in general, and to every one of

1. "Letters on Toleration" p.5.

his subjects in particular, the just possession of these things belonging to this life. - - Now that the whole jurisdiction of the magistrate reaches only to these civil concernments; and that all civil power, right and dominion, is bounded and confined to the only care of promoting these things; and that it neither can nor ought in any manner to be extended to the salvation of souls; these following considerations seem unto me abundantly to demonstrate.

First, because the care of souls is not committed to the civil magistrate, any more than to other men. It is not committed unto him, I say, by God; because it appears not that God has ever given any such authority to one man over another, as to compel any one to his religion. Nor can any such power be vested in the magistrate by the consent of the people. - - - In the second place: The care of souls cannot belong to the civil magistrate, because his power consists only in outward force: but true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind, without which nothing can be acceptable to God. - - - In the third place, the care of the salvation of men's souls cannot belong to the magistrate; because, though the rigour of laws and the force of penalties were capable to convince and change mens minds, yet would not that help at all to the salvation of their souls. For, there being but one truth, one way to heaven; what hopes is there that more men would be led into it, if they had no other rule to follow but the religion of the court, and blindly to resign of themselves to the religion which either ignorance, ambition, or superstition

had chanced to establish in the countries where they were born?" The position here outlined is eminently clear and practical and needs no further comment. We may, however, note in passing that the moral structure of Society derives, in Locke's opinion, from belief in God. In fact "those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of God.

Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist. The taking away of God, though even in thought, dissolves all¹." The time had not yet come to take away this last religious sanction from political society and to place the civil state on purely secular foundations. It was left to modern times to take this step and make the last concession to the freedom of opinions.

There is, of course, a trace in Locke's conceptions of the current "Social Contract" theory, but we need not dwell on this and similar details, for the civil state in 1689 was, in fact, more contractual in character than it had ever been before. The real difficulty is that life in all its aspects cannot easily be fitted into such a clear-cut scheme. The purely speculative elements in religion can never readily be separated from their consequences in social life. Moreover, in nearly every European country, and not least in England, one particular sect embraced the greater part of the population. Citizenship in the State was roughly co-extensive with membership of the Church, and in his

1. "Letters" p.31.

radical conclusions on these matters may be found the real basis of his views on Toleration.

In turning to this aspect of the matter, Locke really becomes a powerful advocate of Protestant Nonconformity against the Church of England. His outlook on religion is unusually liberal, and though his views are inevitably limited by contemporary forms and traditions, these do not seriously affect the general cogency of his argument. Like Chillingworth, for instance, he regards "the indubitable doctrines of the Scripture" as the final rule of Protestant faith, for "those are acknowledged by all Christians to be of divine inspiration, and therefore fundamental¹." He has, indeed, no quarrel with the best religion of his time but constantly refers to "the one true religion", which, however, is not of necessity the national faith. "You suppose," he writes² to Proast, "there is one true religion, and but one. In this we are both agreed: and from hence, I think, it will follow, since whoever is of this true religion shall be saved, and without being of it no man shall be saved, that upon your second and third supposition, it will be hard to show any national religion to be this only true religion. For who is it will say, he knows or that it is knowable, that any national religion, wherein must be comprehended all that, by the penal laws, he is required to embrace, is that only true religion; which if men reject, they shall, and which, if they embrace, they shall not, miss salvation? - - For

1. "Letters" p.38.

2. Ibid. p.291.

that, and that alone, is the one only true religion, without which no body can be saved, and which is enough for the salvation of every one who embraces it. And therefore whatever is less or more than this, is not the one only true religion, or that which there is a necessity for their salvation, men should be forced to embrace." Locke thus informs¹ us what this true religion is: "1. That there is a faith that makes men Christians. 2. That this faith is the believing 'Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah'. 3. That the believing Jesus to be the Messiah includes in it a receiving him for our Lord and King, promised and sent from God; and so lays upon all his subjects an absolute and indispensable necessity of assenting to all that they can attain the knowledge that he taught; and of a sincere obedience to all that he commanded." He insists, however, - and this is by no means the least satisfying aspect of his "Letters" - that these general beliefs must be held sincerely by every individual for himself. "The end here," so Locke declares², "is to make a man a true Christian, that he may be saved; and he is then and then only, a true Christian, and in the way of salvation, when he believes, and with sincerity obeys the Gospel." This is, of course, to state once more the right of private judgement, so suspect in authoritarian eyes; but, even so, the real conflict only comes to light when Locke proceeds to formulate his views

1. "Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity." Works. (1812) vii : 421.

2. "Letters" p.273.

upon the associations into which such individual Christians might reasonably be expected to form themselves. "A church then," he writes¹, "I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the publick worshipping of God, in such a manner as they may judge acceptable to them, and effectual to the salvation of their souls. I say, it is a free and voluntary society. Nobody is born a member of any church; otherwise the religion of parents would descend unto children, by the same right of inheritance as their temporal estates, and every one would hold his faith by the same tenure he does his lands; than which nothing can be imagined more absurd. - - No man by nature is bound into any particular church or sect, but every one joins himself voluntarily to that society in which he believes he has found that profession and worship which is truly acceptable to God." Such, then, is Locke's conception of the Church, and though it may be criticised in one or two details, these do not minimise its very great importance. To some it will appear that his remarks on the absurdity of the children's inheriting the religion of their parents, are not literally true; and some will doubtless feel that the "gathered" church of classic Independency has unduly influenced his mind. The real point, however, is that here we have a deep and reasoned statement on the nature of religious association within a civil state and that it is fundamentally opposed to the traditional "High

1. Ibid. p.7.

Church" view. On this latter view the Church was, first and last, a divinely appointed and divinely organised body whose claims had precedence in all human affairs; and there is little doubt that, in unworthy hands, the doctrine has been fruitful of persecution in every age. For Locke religion was essentially an individual matter and the Church was little more than a convenient and useful aid to the faith and aspirations of individual men. In Campbell Fraser's words he looked upon all churches as "accidents of religion, not parts of its essence, which lay in personal faith and conduct, and might flourish under any ecclesiastical organization or even apart from all organized religious societies". It is true that such associations will require some laws and rules by which to regulate their life, but these will be conditioned by, and adapted to the needs of the community. To those who object "that no such society can be said to be a true church, unless it have in it a bishop, or presbyter, with ruling authority derived from the very apostles, and continued down into the present times by an uninterrupted succession" he thus replies¹: "Let them show me the edict by which Christ has imposed that law upon his church. And let not any think me impertinent, if, in a thing of this consequence, I require that the terms of that edict be very express and positive. For the promise he has made us, that 'wheresoever two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them'

1. "Letters" p.8.

(Matt. xviii.), seems to imply the contrary. Whether such an assembly want anything necessary to a true church, pray do you consider. Certain I am, that nothing can be there wanting unto the salvation of souls; which is sufficient for our purpose."

So far, then, Locke has laid it down that the business of religion is to saving of the soul and that all associations which are deemed expedient to this end are free, voluntary and individual within the civil state. From this he passes on to some inevitable conclusions with regard to the methods and powers of such religious groups. To begin with, every individual should be free to leave whatever body he has joined when he believes it no more serves the end for which it was established. He writes¹ as follows: "The hopes of salvation, as it was the only cause of his entrance into that communion, so it can be the only reason of his stay there. For if afterwards he discover any thing either erroneous in the doctrine, or incongruous in the worship of that society to which he has joined himself, why should it not be as free for him to go out as it was to enter? No member of a religious society can be tied with any other bonds but what proceed from the certain expectation of eternal life." When, on the other hand, an individual member of a religious society persistently ignores or disobeys its rules, the society may deal with him only so far as these particular rules will allow; "but that the

1. Ibid. p.7.

church of Christ" he adds¹, "should persecute others and force others by fire and sword, to embrace her faith and doctrine, I could never yet find in any of the books of the New Testament". Locke always bears in mind that the purpose of religious association is public worship and the salvation of men. Thus all the laws of such societies "must be established by means suitable to the nature of such things, whereof the external profession and observations, if not proceeding from a thorough conviction and approbation of the mind, is altogether useless and unprofitable. The arms by which the members of this society are to be kept within their duty, are exhortations, admonitions, and advice. If by these means the offenders will not be reclaimed, and the erroneous convinced, there remains nothing further to be done, but that such stubborn and obstinate persons, who give no ground to hope for their reformation, should be cast out and separated from the society. This is the last and utmost force of ecclesiastical authority; no other punishment can thereby be inflicted, than that the relation ceasing between the body and the member which is cut off, the person so condemned ceases to be a part of that church."

The argument for Toleration implied by Locke's conception of civil and religious society is further strengthened by some trenchant observations on the practical effects of persecution. "In matters of religion," he maintains², "none are so easy to be driven, as those who

1. "Letters" p.9.

2. "Letters" p.78.

have nothing of religion at all; and next to them, the vicious, the ignorant, the wordling, and the hypocrite; who care for no more of religion but the name, nor no more of any church, but its prosperity and power; and who, not unlike those described by our Saviour (Luke xx : 47), for a show come to, or cry up the prayers of the church, 'that they may devour widows', and other helpless peoples' houses'." Sincere belief, on the other hand, cannot be moved by threats and penal measures as the events since 1662 had abundantly revealed. At most, the use of force and penalties effects an outward conformity and fails to bring about the change of life and heart which all agree to be the end of true religion. "Penalties laid on men" he writes¹, "till they outwardly conform, are not a remedy laid to the disease (of lust and wrong). Punishments so applied have no opposition to mens lusts, nor from thence can be expected any cure. Men must be driven from their aversion to the true religion by penalties they have a greater aversion to. This is all the operation of force. But if by getting into the communion of the national church they can avoid the penalties, and yet retain their natural corruption and aversion to true religion, what remedy is there to the disease by penalties so applied?" The use of force, he holds², is much more likely to have ill effects than good, "1. Because men out of the right way are as apt, I think I may say apter, to use force than others. For truth, I mean the truth of the

1. Ibid. p.112.

2. "Letters" p.50.

Gospel, which is that of the true religion, is mild, and gentle, and meek, and apter to use prayers and entreaties, than force, to gain a hearing. 2. Because the magistrates of the world, or the civil sovereigns, as you think it more proper to call them, being few of them in the right way; not one of ten, take which side you will, perhaps you will grant not one of an hundred, being of the true religion; it is likely your indirect way of using of force would do an hundred, or at least ten times as much harm as good." In fact the use of persecution had inspired the greater part of all the wars and sorrows which at one time or another had afflicted nearly every Christian State¹. The one result of persecution, he asserts², has been "to perpetuate sects among Christians, to the great prejudice of Christianity, and scandal to infidels, more than any thing that can arise from a mutual Toleration, with charity and a good life". He is convinced³, on the other hand, that "truth certainly would do well enough, if she were once left to shift for herself. She seldom has received, and I fear never will receive, much assistance from the power of great men, to whom she is but rarely known, and more rarely welcome. She is not taught by laws, nor has she any need of force to procure her entrance into the minds of men". Thus, by his reading of experience as by his theory of social life Locke comes to one conclusion: "if it be a mark of true religion, that it will prevail by its own light and strength, but that false

1. Ibid. p.36.

2. Ibid. p.27.

3. Ibid. p.27.

religions will not, but have need of force and foreign helps to support them, nothing certainly can be more for the advantage of true religion, than to take away compulsion every where¹." It should, however, be observed that Locke is not prepared to make this freedom universal but mentions some specific cases where it should be totally denied. In one such case, when "men herd themselves into companies with distinctions from the public", it has been assumed that he refers to Quakers who affected sundry eccentricities in speech and dress; but the vagueness of his language makes this judgement most uncertain. As to Atheists and Roman Catholics there is no doubt at all; he would exclude them altogether from the civil state. The first are dangerous to society because, in Locke's opinion, such society can only be maintained upon the basis of belief in God. His fears in this respect have so far proved to be without foundation. His views on Roman Catholics were the natural results of their own activities and doctrines. If Locke's conception of the State was true could it afford to tolerate a body which, in the end, apparently denied its validity? Moreover, if religious toleration was a true instinct of the civil society, could a Church which was professedly inimical to Toleration be allowed to grow within its borders? Such questions are by no means so easily answered as may at first appear, and it is not altogether matter for surprise that Locke should find no answer but the negative.

1. Ibid. p.41.

It is, of course, impossible to indicate in any fitting way the real power and value of the "Letters on Toleration". The style is always pleasant, the argument complete and closely reasoned, and the whole transformed by that indefinable quality which only genius gives. For us, as for that changing England into which the "Letters" came they still remain their own best exposition and defence. But if we may retain a word which most interpreters have used and say that Locke enunciates a "theory" of Toleration, that theory must certainly be sought in the particular views of civil and religious society which we have tried to represent above. His views, though frequently denied and at best but partially adopted, undoubtedly became the accepted doctrine of the eighteenth century. We may therefore close this survey with a brief review of what has gone before in the light of Locke's conclusions.

On the whole, then, in spite of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts, it may be said that the growth of Toleration in England was continuous if slow throughout the reigns of William III, Anne and George I. In close on forty years from 1689 the bare concessions of the Toleration Act, which granted liberty of worship to Dissenters, were extended to relieve them from the penalties which infringement of the Test and Corporation Acts might still incur. To what must we ascribe the change? The answer in a general sense would seem to be that persecuting methods, if they ever had value as social expedients, had not only

lost their value but had become positively dangerous to the best corporate life. As Mandell Creighton says¹ the idea of Toleration was a greater one than that of persecution and growing social experience was slowly bringing this home to the better part of Englishmen.

In the realization of this idea several parties had a share. In the first place, we must give all praise to the Dissenters themselves whose very existence, apart altogether from the intrinsic nature of their claims, compelled attention to their problem. But beyond the mere fact of their presence in the State their intrinsic quality was a powerful argument for liberty and recognition. That they possessed a spiritual outlook and conserved values of the highest significance for any community has never been seriously denied. To grant such people liberty was therefore not to weaken but greatly to enrich national life.

In the second place, the growth of liberal doctrine in the Church of England greatly helped to bring about the change. In the last analysis the rise of Latitudinarianism meant a changed conception of the very nature of the Christian faith. All "authority" in the theological sense was set aside, or had at least to be reconciled with reason and the greater human values. This attitude which has been by far the noblest and most fruitful in English religious life not only took away one of the historic causes of persecution but freely allowed that inquiry and even

1. "Persecution and Tolerance" chs. iv and v.

divergence of opinion were of the very nature of the Christian faith.

Finally - and it is here that we perceive the truth and insight of John Locke's conclusions - the changes brought about in 1688 established once for all the nature of the Civil State and laid down the lines that it has followed ever since. It was not merely that religion and opinions generally were placed outside the power of civil magistracy; it became abundantly clear that the State which permitted or indulged in religious persecution was seriously affecting its own particular function and hampering its true development. Civil order and material prosperity may still be held by some to be mundane and secondary considerations, but the wiser part of men have never held them in disdain. It is not too much to say that in the end these matters were conclusive for Toleration. The bigotry of persecuting men destroyed social peace and stultified commercial enterprise. The State was fully justified in removing this very real hindrance to its best and fullest life.

It may not be out of place to end these pages with a frank admission that the evidence adduced is not exhaustive of the subject and that the conclusions reached may not be final. This survey of the period cannot profess to be more than a preliminary one and may well be amplified on further reading; but, such as it is, it is modestly presented to the University to which the writer owes so much.

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